

SPECIAL
REPORT
FROM THE
SELECT COMMITTEE
ON
PUBLIC PETITIONS;
TOGETHER WITH THE
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE,
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,
AND APPENDIX.

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
14 June 1887.*

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HENRY HANSARD AND SON;
AND
Published by EYRE and SPOTTISWOODE, East Harding-street, London, E.C.,
and 21, Abingdon-street, Westminster, S.W.;
ADAM and CHARLES BLACK, North Bridge, Edinburgh;
and HODGINS, FRODIP, and Co., 104, Graffen-street, Dublin.

Ordered,—[*Monday, 31st January 1887*]:—THAT a Select Committee be appointed, to whom shall be referred all Petitions presented to the House, with the exception of such as relate to Private Bills; and that such Committee do classify and prepare abstracts of the same, in such form and manner as shall appear to them best suited to convey to the House all requisite information respecting their contents, and do report the same from time to time to the House; and that the Reports of the Committee do set forth the number of signatures to each Petition only in respect to those signatures to which addresses are affixed.

THAT such Committee have power to direct the printing *in extenso* of such Petitions, or of such parts of Petitions, as shall appear to require it.

THAT the Committee have power to report their Opinion and Observations thereupon to the House.

Committee nominated of—

Sir Charles Forster.

Mr. William Lowther.

Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.

Mr. Hugh Elliot.

Colonel Bridgeman.

Mr. Donald Crawford.

Mr. Mulholland.

Viscount Lymington.

Mr. Wiggin.

Mr. McLagan.

Mr. Morgan Howard.

Mr. Henry Tollsmache.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor.

Mr. James A. Campbell.

THAT Three be the Quorum of the Committee.

Ordered,—[*Wednesday, 2nd February 1887*]:—THAT Mr. Alderman John O'Connor be added to the Committee.

Ordered,—[*Thursday, 10th February 1887*]:—THAT Mr. James Campbell be discharged from further attendance, and that Mr. Dalrymple be added to the Committee.

Ordered,—[*Monday, 2nd May 1887*]:—THAT leave be given to the Committee to make a Special Report.

Special Report brought up, and read, as followeth:—

“ Public Petitions Committee.

“ Special Report.

“ Since the Special Report made by your Committee to the House on the subject of the alleged fictitious or forged signatures to the Petition from Haggerstone, in favour of the London Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill, other Petitions in favour of the said Bill have been presented, the signatures to which appear to your Committee to be also fictitious or forged, and that, previous to the presentation of the Petition from Haggerstone, there were other Petitions relating to the same subject which excited suspicion.”

Ordered, THAT the Report be referred back to the Committee.

THAT it be an Instruction to the Committee that they do inquire into the circumstances under which, and the parties by whom, the names appearing on the Petitions referred to were thereunto appended.

THAT the Committee have power to send for Persons, Papers, and Records.

Order, THAT Three be the Quorum of the Committee, read, and *discharged*.

THAT Five be the Quorum of the Committee.

SPECIAL REPORT	- - - - -	p. iii
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE	- - - - -	p. iv
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE	- - - - -	p. 1
APPENDIX	- - - - -	p. 137

SPECIAL REPORT.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to inquire into the Circumstances under which, and the Parties by whom the NAMES appearing on certain PETITIONS were thereunto appended;—HAVE considered the matters to them referred, and have agreed to the following REPORT:—

1. YOUR Committee have examined various petitions referred to them by the House for and against the London Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill.

2. With regard to the petitions against the Bill, they find that, whilst irregularities have been proved in the manner in which signatures were obtained, the signatures are, in the main, genuine, and free from suspicion of fraud.

3. With regard to the petitions for the Bill, there is evidence of extensive fraud, and it has been proved that twenty-nine of them, specially selected for examination, were wholly or in great part forgeries.

4. The petitions for the Bill were initiated by the City Solicitor, who instructed Mr. Robert Thomas Wragg, who in turn engaged the services of Mr. Carlton Roberts. Mr. John Walter Hallett and a number of other sub-agents were employed by Mr. Carlton Roberts. The sub-agents engaged canvassers to procure signatures, one of whom was Mr. Reginald Bidmead, employed by Mr. Hallett. The canvassers for signatures were remunerated on a scale of from 3 s. to 6 s. per hundred signatures.

5. Your Committee think it necessary to put on record their sense of the great negligence shown by those who were in different degrees responsible for the petitions which have been the subject of this inquiry. They are of opinion that, although no charge of participation in fraud has been brought home to Mr. Carlton Roberts, still his neglect to exercise proper supervision over the work of his sub-agents led directly to the irregularities that followed. As regards Mr. Hallett, who employed Mr. Reginald Bidmead, your Committee are of opinion that his conduct is open to grave reflection, and that his evidence is contradictory.

6. The case against Mr. Reginald Bidmead is complete. He is clearly proved, on his own confession, to have forged 1,600 or 1,700 names, and to have affixed to the Haggerstone petition 200 names taken haphazard from a London Directory.

7. Your Committee are of opinion that it is impossible for the House, with due respect to its rights, to pass over this case without serious notice. They consider that it comes within the precedent of 1865, when certain persons were committed to Newgate for having got up petitions in favour of Azem Jah, an Indian Prince, and they recommend that this case should be dealt with as a breach of the privileges of this House.

8. Your Committee desire to record their opinion that the right of petitioning the House of Commons has, of late years, been subjected to serious abuse, and merits the attention of the House.

The points to which your Committee would specially call attention, are,—

(a.) The placing of petitions on tables in the open air at which the signatures of passers-by are obtained, which are not capable of identification;

(b.) The piecing together of sheets of signatures without reference to the quarter from which they are obtained, and the headings ultimately affixed to them;

(c.) The practice of presenting petitions without any kind of voucher for their genuineness.

14 June 1887.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE.

Wednesday, 4th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Alderman John O'Connor.
Mr. M'Lagan.

Mr. Wiggim.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. Mulholland.
Colonel Bridgeman.

The Committee deliberated.

[Adjourned till Friday, 6th May, at Twelve o'clock.]

Friday, 6th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. William Lowther.
Viscount Lynton.

Mr. Alderman John O'Connor.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. M'Lagan.

Mr. A. Taylor called, and examined.

Sir Lewis Pelley, Mr. Joseph Howard, and Captain Colvill, Members of this House, called, and examined.

Mr. Reginald Bidmead and Mr. John Walter Hallett, were sworn, and examined.

[Adjourned till Monday, 9th May.]

Monday, 9th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Mulholland.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. M'Lagan.
Mr. Wiggim.
Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.

Mr. A. Taylor, re-called, sworn, and examined.

Mr. Frederick William Lee, Mr. Carlton Roberts, and Mr. Robert Thomas Wray, were sworn, and examined.

Mr. Carlton Roberts further examined.

Mr. John Lloyd, sworn, and examined.

[Adjourned till Tuesday, 10th May, at Twelve o'clock.]

Tuesday, 10th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Wiggins.
Viscount Lymington.

Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. McLagan.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Mr. Charles S. Graham, sworn, and examined.

Mr. Richard G. Webster, a Member of this House, called, and examined.

Mr. Newton Wilson, Mr. Thomas Correll, Mr. Charles Beard, Mr. W. H. De Herve, were sworn, and examined.

Mr. Carlton Roberts and Mr. John Lloyd, were re-called, sworn, and examined.

Mr. W. Stewart, sworn, and examined.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Petition from King's Cross and vicinity, presented on the 6th May by the honourable Member for St. Pancras, be placed at the disposal of the Committee on Public Petitions for the purpose of this inquiry."—The Committee divided:—

Ayes, 4.

Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. William Lowther.

Noes, 5.

Sir Charles Forster.
Viscount Lymington.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. Wiggins.

[Adjourned till Thursday next, at Twelve o'clock.

Thursday, 12th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Mulholland.
Viscount Lymington.

Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. McLagan.

In the absence of Sir CHARLES FORSTER through indisposition, Mr. WILLIAM LOWTHER was called to the Chair.

Mr. John George Grellier, Mr. William Henry Cavendish, Mr. Samuel Taylor, Mr. Ober Miles, Mr. T. J. Middleton, Mr. J. E. Edmondson, and Mr. F. G. Netherclift, were sworn, and examined.

Mr. Lewis Henry Isaacs, a Member of the House, called, and examined.

[Adjourned till Monday next, at Twelve o'clock.

Monday, 16th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Mr. McLagan.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Viscount Lynton.

In the absence of Sir CHARLES FORSTER, from indisposition, Mr. WILLIAM LOWTHER was called to the Chair.

Mr. F. G. Nethercift and Mr. Carlton Roberts, were re-called, and examined.

Mr. Henry Usher, sworn, and examined.

Mr. F. G. Nethercift, re-called, and examined.

Mr. Ernest Alfred Dent and Mr. Charles Wm. Bartlett, were sworn, and examined.

[Adjourned till Thursday, 19th May, at Two o'clock.]

Thursday, 19th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Mulholland.
Viscount Lynton.

Mr. McLagan.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Mr. Stephen L. Simeon and Mr. George Ford, sworn, and examined.

Mr. W. H. Cornish, re-called, sworn, and examined.

Mr. Richard Odell, Mr. J. Massey, and Mr. Edward Bryant, were sworn, and examined.

Mr. Arthur Lacey Bryant, called, and examined.

Mr. W. H. Cornish, re-called, and examined.

Mr. A. Hill, Mr. A. Russell, Mr. T. Lennex, and Mr. Alfred Henry Hunter, were sworn, and examined.

Mr. Carlton Roberts, re-called, and examined.

The Committee deliberated.

[Adjourned till Monday, 23rd May, at Twelve o'clock.]

Monday, 23rd May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. Mulholland.

Mr. William Lowther.
Viscount Lynton.
Colonel Bridgeman.

Mr. Stephen L. Simeon re-called, and further examined.

Mr. Abiel G. Sharland sworn, and examined.

Mr. J. W. Hallett and Mr. Abiel G. Sharland were re-called, and further examined.

The Evidence was closed.

The room was cleared.—The Committee deliberated.

[Adjourned till Friday 10th June, at Twelve o'clock.]

Friday, 10th June 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT :

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. Wiggins.
Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Henry Tollerbach.
Mr. T. P. O'Connor.

Viscount Lynton,
Mr. Donald Crawford,
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. McLagan.
Mr. Dalrymple.

The Committee deliberated.

DRAFT REPORT, by the *Chairman*, brought up, and read the first time, as follows :—

" 1. Your Committee having examined the petitions referred to them by the House in support of the London Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill, find that 29 of these petitions are wholly or in part fictitious. These petitions seem to have been got up by Mr. Robert Thomas Wragg, who received instructions for their initiation from the City Solicitor. He engaged the services of certain sub-agents, viz., Mr. Carlton Roberts, Mr. Hallett, and others. Mr. Bidmead was also employed by Mr. Hallett to procure signatures.

" 2. These sub-agents were remunerated on a scale of from 4s. to 6s. per 100 signatures.

" 3. The forgery of signatures in connection with these petitions appears to have been very extensive.

" 4. Mr. Netherliff, the expert, of whose services your Committee availed themselves, finds that every signature throughout is in two or three hand-writings, and he gives it as his opinion that practically the whole 34,000 signatures are forgeries.

" 5. Your Committee have also examined petitions against the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill, but, with the exception of a few trifling irregularities, they seem to be perfectly genuine, and free from all suspicion of fraud.

" 6. Though your Committee have been unable to bring home by direct evidence a charge of participation in these frauds to Mr. Wragg, Mr. Carlton Roberts, and Mr. Hallett, they cannot acquit them of gross negligence and want of proper supervision over the parties whom they engaged to procure signatures.

" 7. With regard, however, to Mr. Reginald Bidmead, the case is complete. He is clearly proved, on his own confession, to have forged almost all the names appended to the petition from Haggerstone. According to his own evidence the first name affixed to that petition is a forgery, while 200 names were taken haphazard from a London Directory in order that he might the sooner receive his remuneration.

" 8. Your Committee are of opinion that it is impossible for the House, with due respect to its rights and privileges, to pass over this case without serious notice. They consider that it comes strictly within the precedent of 1865, when certain persons were committed to Newgate for having got up petitions in favour of Azem Jah, an Indian prince, and they recommend that this case should be dealt with accordingly."

Motion made, and Question, That the Draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph,—put, and agreed to.

Paragraph 1, amended, and agreed to.

Paragraph 2.—Amendment proposed, at the commencement of the paragraph, to insert the words "with regard to the petitions against the Bill, they find that whilst considerable irregularities have been proved in the manner in which signatures were obtained, the signatures are in the main genuine and free from suspicion of fraud."

Amendment proposed to the proposed Amendment, to leave out the word "considerable"—(Mr. Wiggins).—Question, That the word "considerable" stand part of the proposed Amendment,—put, and negatived.

Another

Another Amendment proposed to the said proposed Amendment, to insert the word "great"—(Mr. Donald Crawford),—instead thereof.—Question put, That the word "great" be there inserted.—The Committee divided:

Ayes, 5.	Noes, 6.
Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.	Mr. Donald Crawford.
Colonel Bridgeman.	Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. William Lowther.	Viscount Lynton.
Mr. Mulholland.	Mr. McLagan.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.	Mr. T. P. O'Connor.
	Mr. Wiggan.

Another Amendment proposed to the said proposed Amendment, to insert the word "trifling"—(Mr. T. P. O'Connor),—instead thereof.—Question, That the word "trifling" be there inserted,—put, and *negatived*.

Another Amendment proposed to the said proposed Amendment, to leave out the words "genuine and"—(Colonel Bridgeman).—Question put, That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the Paragraph.—The Committee divided:

Ayes, 6.	Noes, 5.
Mr. Donald Crawford.	Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Mr. Dalrymple.	Colonel Bridgeman.
Viscount Lynton.	Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. McLagan.	Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. T. P. O'Connor.	Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. Wiggan.	

Paragraph, as amended, *agreed to*.

Paragraph 3, amended, and *agreed to*.

Amendment proposed to insert the following new Paragraph in the proposed Report: "With regard to the petitions for the Bill, there is evidence of extensive fraud, and it has been proved that twenty-nine of them, specially selected for examination, were wholly or in great part forgeries"—(Mr. Dalrymple).

Paragraph *agreed to*, and inserted in the proposed Report.

Paragraph 4, amended, and *agreed to*.

Paragraphs 5 and 6, *negatived*.

Paragraph 7, amended, and *agreed to*.

[Adjourned till Monday, 13th June, at Two o'clock.]

Monday, 13th June 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES FORSTER in the Chair.

Mr. Wiggan.	Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Viscount Lynton.	Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Mulholland.	Mr. McLagan.
Mr. Donald Crawford.	Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Mr. Dalrymple.	Mr. William Lowther.

Amendment proposed to insert the following new Paragraph in the proposed Report: "Your Committee think it necessary to put on record their sense of the gross negligence shown by those who were in different degrees responsible for the petitions which have been the subject of this inquiry; from this statement they cannot exclude Mr. Wragg"—(Viscount Lynton).—Amendment proposed to the proposed Amendment, to leave out the word "gross"—(Mr. McLagan).—Question, That the word "gross" stand part of the proposed new Paragraph,—put, and *negatived*.—Another Amendment proposed, to insert the word "great"—(Mr. Donald Crawford),—instead thereof,—put, and *agreed to*.—Another Amendment proposed, to leave out the words "From this statement they cannot

exclude Mr. Wragg"—(Mr. Henry Tollenache).—Motion made, and Question put, That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the Paragraph.—The Committee divided:

Ayes, 4.

Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Viscount Lymington.
Mr. W' Lagan.

Noes, 5.

Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Henry Tollenache.
Mr. Wiggin.

Paragraph, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraph 6, amended, and agreed to.

Paragraph 7, amended, and agreed to.

Amendment proposed to insert the following new Paragraph in the proposed Report:—
"Your Committee desire to record their opinion that the right of petitioning the House of Commons has, of late years, been subjected to serious abuse, and merits the attention of the House"—(Colonel Bridgeman).—Motion made, and Question put, That this Paragraph be inserted in the proposed Report.—The Committee divided:

Ayes, 7.

Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. M' Lagan.
Mr. Henry Tollenache.
Mr. Wiggin.

Noes, 2.

Viscount Lymington.
Mr. Mulholland.

Another Amendment proposed at the end of the proposed new Paragraph, to add the following words:

"The points to which your Committee would specially call attention, are,—

"(a.) The placing of petitions on tables in the open air at which the signatures of passers-by are obtained, which are not capable of identification.

"(b.) The piecing together of sheets of signatures without reference to the quarter from which they are obtained, and the headings ultimately affixed to them.

"(c.) The practice of presenting petitions without any kind of voucher for their genuineness"—(Mr. Donald Crawford)

Question, That those words be there added,—put, and agreed to.

New Paragraph, as amended, agreed to, and inserted in the proposed Report.

Motion made, and Question, That this be the Report of the Committee to the House,—put, and agreed to.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

Friday, 6th May 1887.

	PAGE
Mr. Alfred Taylor - - - -	1
Lieut-General Sir Lewis Pelly, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., M.P. - - - -	2
Captain John Charles Ready Colomb, M.P. -	4
Mr. Reginald Bidmead - - - -	6
Mr. John Walter Hallett - - - -	22

Monday, 9th May 1887.

Mr. Alfred Taylor - - - -	32
Mr. Frederick William Lee - - - -	34
Mr. Carlton Roberts - - - -	35, 55
Mr. Robert Thomas Wragg - - - -	48
Mr. John Lloyd - - - -	56

Tuesday, 10th May 1887.

Mr. Charles Stewart Graham - - - -	61
Mr. Robert Grant Webster, M.P. - - - -	62
Mr. Newton Wilson - - - -	63
Mr. Thomas Currell - - - -	67
Mr. Charles Board - - - -	71
Mr. William Henry De Horne - - - -	74
Mr. Carlton Roberts - - - -	76
Mr. John Lloyd - - - -	76
Mr. William Stewart - - - -	77

Thursday, 12th May 1887.

Mr. John George Grellier - - - -	78
Mr. William Henry Coombs - - - -	79
Mr. Samuel Henry Taylor - - - -	81
Mr. Oliver Miles - - - -	83
Mr. Thomas John Middleton - - - -	86
Mr. James Edmondson - - - -	92
Mr. Frederick George Nethereliff - - - -	93
Mr. Lewis Henry Isaac, M.P. - - - -	97

Monday, 16th May 1887.

	PAGE
Mr. Frederick George Nethereliff, 99, 112, 117	
Mr. Carlton Roberts - - - -	102
Mr. Henry Usher - - - -	106
Mr. Ernest Alfred Dent - - - -	112
Mr. Charles William Bartlett - - - -	115

Thursday, 19th May 1887.

Mr. Stephen L. Simeon - - - -	118
Mr. George Ford - - - -	119
Mr. William Henry Coombs - - - -	120, 123
Mr. Richard Davis Odell - - - -	121
Mr. Edmund Charles Massey - - - -	121
Mr. Edward Bryant - - - -	122
Mr. Arthur Ranney Bryant - - - -	122
Mr. Henry Hill - - - -	123
Mr. Abraham Russell - - - -	123
Thomas Lennox - - - -	124
Alfred Henry Hunnax - - - -	126
Mr. Carlton Roberts - - - -	126

Monday, 23rd May 1887.

Mr. Stephen L. Simeon - - - -	127
Mr. Abdiel George Sharland - - - -	127, 130
Mr. John Walter Hallett - - - -	127

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

Friday, 6th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT :

Sir Charles Forster.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. William Lowther.

Viscount Lymington.
Mr. McLagan.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Alderman John O'Connor.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.

SIR CHARLES FORSTER, IN THE CHAIR.

MR. ALFRED TAYLOR, Examined.

1. *Chairman.*] I BELIEVE you are a Clerk in the Journal Office?—I am a Civil Service Writer.
2. In the Journal Office?—Yes.
3. Are you in charge of the petitions?—Yes, I am.
4. Do you produce certain petitions with regard to the coal and wine duties?—I do.
5. What are they?—There is a petition from Haggerston, presented on the 6th of April by Lord Claud Hamilton; another, presented on the 16th of March from the ratepayers of North Hackney by Sir Lewis Pelly; and another from the ratepayers of North Hackney.
6. When was that petition presented?—Upon the 16th of March last. There is, again, another petition from the ratepayers of North Hackney upon the 21st of March, presented by Sir Guyer Hunter; there is another from the ratepayers of Homerton and Hackney, presented on the 23rd of March by Sir Guyer Hunter; another from the ratepayers of Lower Clapton, presented upon the 21st of March by Sir Guyer Hunter; another from the ratepayers of Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland.
7. When was that petition presented?—Upon the 25th of April, by Sir James McGarel-Hogg. The next is from the ratepayers of Bow, presented upon the 23rd of March by Captain Colomh; then there is one from the ratepayers of Hackney and Dalston, presented by Mr. Joseph Howard upon the 16th of March; and another from the ratepayers of Hackney and East London, presented by Mr. Joseph Howard upon the 24th of March. Those are all from that district.
8. Do those petitions all relate to the coal and wine duties?—Yes; those petitions are all in favour of the London Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill.
9. The nine petitions are all in favour?—Yes.
10. Have you examined the petitions from the other side against the continuance of those duties?—I was not instructed to present those petitions to your notice to-day.
11. Now, I will ask you another question: those petitions of which you have told us go far back, even as far as March; why were they not brought under the notice of this Committee before?—The reason they were not brought before the

6th May 1887.] Lieutenant-General Sir L. Pelly, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., M.P. [Continued.]

25. Mr. Lowther.] Would you find the petition which you presented. (*The Witness having selected it.*)

26. Where is this petition from?—The ratepayers of North Hackney.

27. Chairman.] When was this petition presented?—On the 16th March. I see what might be considered an irregularity, but I do not know whether it will be considered so. I remember the petition. When it came to me, I found on looking through it that it was from various alleged residents in my constituency, and that they had entered themselves simply as "ratepayers;" so in my own handwriting I attached the words "of North Hackney," so as to identify it, and then I attached my signature.

28. Mr. Lowther.] Do you know from whom you received that one?—I cannot at this moment identify any signature, and I do not recollect; but I think that this petition reached me in the House of Commons in the cloak-room, but I am not quite certain; I think so.

29. Chairman.] It was not given you by any private hand; you got it in the cloak-room?—I do not remember any petition being given me by a private hand. Sometimes they might be sent otherwise than through the post to my private residence, but they reach me in my hall with my ordinary post, and then they are examined by me in my own house; or if I come here I generally go to the book in the cloak-room, and ask if there is any petition in my name, and if there is I take it up and examine it to the best of my ability; but I say again that I should be extremely chary in refusing to receive a petition from any British subject.

30. Mr. Lowther.] Do you recognise in that petition any names of your constituents, or the addresses of any of them?—(*After referring to the Petition*) "Gallard" is a name I recognise, 31, Pemhry Grove, Clapton; I do not recollect that address.

31. Do you think you know Mr. Gallard personally?—This is apparently from Mrs. Gallard; I cannot say that I recollect her.

32. Is Mr. Gallard a constituent of yours?—I recognise the name.

33. As one of your constituents?—Yes, as one of my constituents.

34. Colonel Bridgeman.] But this is signed "Mrs. Gallard"?—Yes.

35. That is very peculiar; it is not signed by any Christian name, but is signed "Mrs. Gallard"?—Yes.

36. Then there is James Fown, 81, Rendlesham-road?—I could not say I recognise that as the name of a constituent, but it would be very difficult to identify any one of those persons with 51,000 persons in the district.

37. Mr. Donald Crawford.] Was that petition accompanied by any note?—That I think is impossible for me to tell you; I might be able to tell you, if I referred to my record, for as a rule I think I record all these things, and never tear up a single paper connected with my constituency. When I had time I used to keep a copy of every letter that I wrote, but that has become impossible under the present condition of the House of Commons.

38. Are the petitions usually accompanied by a covering letter?—As I was mentioning just now, if I meet with them in the House, a petition may lie rolled up with something written upon it; I do not recollect an instance in which I have found a petition in the cloak-room with anything written upon it; but I have sometimes received a note without giving any address, saying, "Sir, I have forwarded to you a petition against" So-and-so, and if I do not find the petition in the hall of my private house I find it in the House of Commons.

39. The petitions do not give any means of identification?—No, and that is what I complain of. A man writes me a note; if I can make out his signature, it is as much as ever I can; they frequently give no address, and very frequently no date. That is the case with all sorts of constituents' letters that I get; even when they are applying for an order for the House, they very often give no date, and sometimes no address.

40. You do not consider it necessary to ascertain whether a petition which you receive is genuine?—If you mean do I go to the constituency and ascertain whether

6th May 1887.] Lieutenant-General Sir L. Pelly, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., M.P. [Continued.]

whether the signatures are genuine, no, I do not. If I get a letter covering a petition, alleging that the ratepayers, or the constituents, of North Hackney are desirous of petitioning the House of Commons, I present it.

41. Mr. *Dabrymple*.] Does not it amount to this: that you get a letter relating to a petition either at home or in the House of Commons, and you find the petition in the cloak-room?—Yes.

42. Should you say from your experience that you have frequently had petitions at the cloak-room, or even at your own house, without letters referring to them at all?—I do not think my experience is sufficiently long to entitle me to give an opinion upon that point, but from my very brief experience I should say that, as a rule, I do get some sort of a document; it may be a strip of paper attached to the petition down in the cloak-room, or it may be a letter referring to the petition which is sent to me at my house; at first I did not ask for such document, because I did not know about it.

43. There would be nothing very surprising to find a petition in the cloak-room with no letter about it?—No.

44. And you would not hesitate to present such a petition, even though there was no letter with it?—No, not to present a petition. I should hesitate as to other things; but I have always considered the right of a British subject to petition is one of the first things for which the House of Commons is constituted, and I should hesitate very much with regard to refusing.

45. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] It might often be that the signatures were not those of British subjects, might it not?—If that suggestion means that, with all the work I have to do, I am to go to 50,000 constituents, and ascertain these things, I could not do that; I should have to appeal to the House against it.

46. Mr. *Lowther*.] You feel that you are not responsible in any way for the petitions that are presented?—I think I am responsible so far as that I must find out that it is, as it asserts itself to be, from my constituency. In this particular instance I did do that. It was headed "Ratepayers;" and if I recollect rightly, I had no means of sending the petition back to any particular ratepayer, because I had no address given; but upon looking down it I found the addresses of some ratepayers within my constituency; so I then presented the petition, and instead of putting in the words, "Hackney, Dalston," and so on, I put the words, after "Ratepayers," "of North Hackney," as embodying it all in my district.

47. Viscount *Lynnington*.] In point of fact you cannot identify the signatures as being those of any of your constituents?—No; in point of fact I cannot identify the signatures with any certainty.

CAPTAIN JOHN CHARLES READY COLOMB, a Member of the House; Examined.

48. *Chairman*.] I BELIEVE you presented certain petitions upon the subject of the coal and wine duties?—Yes, for and against.

49. Can you tell the Committee how many?—Knowing that a record was kept, none.

50. Did you present a petition from Bow upon the 23rd of March?—The one that was in my hand just now I did (*having selected a Petition*). That is my signature, so I presented it.

51. Is there anything in that petition that attracted your notice?—Nothing at the time, nor upon looking at it now.

52. Do you know any of the names there?—I recognise some of the names.

53. As your constituents?—As my constituents.

54. Mr. *Lowther*.] Would you tell the Committee what they are?—I see "Lewis Levi."

55. What is the address given for him?—Twenty-nine, Bow-road.

56. Mr. *Tollemache*.] Is that petition signed by the Chairman or anybody that

6th May 1887.]

Captain COLOMB, M.P.

[Continued.]

that you know. I see "and your petitioners will ever pray, William Baines." Do you know that name?—I cannot say that I do; I cannot recall him at this minute.

57. Mr. *Lowther*.] Is it stated that it was signed at a meeting?—No.

58. *Chairman*.] Do you know whether you received the petition in the cloak-room, or was it sent to your house?—I am almost sure that I received this petition in the cloak-room, for the reason that a petition of this size was always received at the House, and never at my own house.

59. Viscount *Lymington*.] Do you know any other names?—John Trott, No. 1, Cardigan-road; of course I may know others, but I should be sorry to be certain as to them.

60. Mr. *Tollemache*.] I suppose you only recognise the name; you do not recognise the handwriting?—No, I cannot say that I do, except that I have seen Lewis Levi's handwriting, and this appears to me to be the same handwriting as his.

61. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] And that is his right address?—I think it is.

62. *Chairman*.] Are the signatures to the petition smeared at all?—I do not think they are more smeared than I have usually observed them to be in petitions I have presented.

63. In some of the petitions that have been presented to us the signatures have been smeared, in order, as it might appear, to escape detection; is there anything of that kind in that petition?—Some of the signatures are very illegible.

64. Viscount *Lymington*.] Are there any names upon that petition which you think you can recognise?—In such a very large constituency it would be very hard for me to be perfectly certain of many of the names; I should have to examine it very closely to be at all certain. Then there is Frederick Willis, at 25, Huddert-street, Bow; I am well acquainted with my constituency, and I do not know that street; the other streets, as far as I can see, are all correct.

65. Mr. *Lowther*.] Having looked at those signatures, does it strike you that there is a strong likeness between them?—Looking at the petition generally, I think their general character is not such as to strike me in that way. There are, undoubtedly, dissimilarities, and also different styles of writing.

66. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] Does it happen, in your experience, to receive petitions without any letters in reference to them reaching you?—Yes.

67. Frequently?—Yes.

68. Then you would not be surprised to receive one in that unsupported way?—Not the least.

69. And you would not have any hesitation in presenting a petition without any communication regarding it reaching you?—No.

70. I am not reflecting upon your procedure; I am only asking the question because it is entirely contrary to my own experience for many years. It rarely has happened to me to receive a petition without some letter about it, either at home or in the House of Commons?—My experience is, that I constantly find, in the cloak-room of the House of Commons, petitions with regard to which I have received no communication whatever.

71. Do you receive petitions from other persons than your own constituency?—Yes, and I have received letters, of course, with regard to petitions which have been either sent to my house, or which have been sent to the cloak-room in the House of Commons.

72. You have received them sometimes?—Yes.

73. But it does not surprise you to receive a petition unconnected with any letter about it?—Not from my experience.

74. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Did you get any petitions upon any other subject without receiving a note about them?—Yes, I did.

75. Upon other subjects?—Yes, upon other subjects.

6th May 1887.

MR. JOSEPH HOWARD (a Member of the House), Examined.

76. *Chairman.*] Did you present any petitions with reference to the subject of the coal and wine duties?—Yes; I presented about six, I should think.

77. How did you receive them?—I received most of them in the cloak-room.

78. Was there anything unusual in their character?—No, I noticed nothing unusual; the whole are similar in form.

79. Have you anything to say with regard to the handwriting?—I did not notice anything special about the handwriting.

80. Which is your petition?—This (*exhibiting a petition*) is one of the petitions I presented. I presented this upon the 24th of March from Hackney and East London. It is not a petition exactly from my own constituency, except that the freeholders of Hackney are allied with the Tottenham Division of Middlesex. The Tottenham Division is my own constituency.

81. Have you anything to say about the handwriting?—There is nothing very special about the handwriting; it looks various; there is nothing to attract one's attention to it in the first instance; it is smeared a good deal.

82. *Mr. Lowther.*] Does it look like accidental smearing, or intentional smearing?—I should not have thought that it was intentional smearing unless my attention had been specially called to it. Petitions come up very dirty very often.

83. *Mr. Tollemache.*] Did you receive any letter with that petition?—I do not think I did. I sometimes do; sometimes I do not.

84. *Viscount Lynton.*] Do you identify any of the signatures in this petition as being those of your constituents?—I do not. There is a name from Stamford-hill, which is in my district, but I do not recollect the name of the person.

85. There was also a petition which you presented on the 16th of March from the ratepayers of Hackney and Dalston?—That also is out of my constituency.

86. Would you examine that (*handing the petition to the Witness*)?—This handwriting looks rather more similar, looking down it now; but I should not have noticed it in the first instance.

87. *Mr. Lowther.*] By "rather more similar" you mean that several of the signatures resemble each other?—Yes.

88. You think they might have been written by the same person, though indicating different names and addresses?—Yes.

89. *Chairman.*] Now your attention has been drawn to the smearing; do not you think that is intentional?—In this petition it does look rather like it.

90. *Mr. M'Lagan.*] As a rule, do you look down the signatures to see that they are in good order?—I do not always look right to the end, but I open them all, and glance down the signatures to see that there is nothing out of order in them.

91. And nothing struck you in those cases?—Nothing struck me with regard to those petitions.

The Committee-room having been cleared,—

MR. REGINALD BIDMEAD, was called in, sworn; and Examined.

92. *Chairman.*] Is that your letter (*handing a letter to the Witness*), addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons?—Yes.

93. Do you attend here to make a voluntary statement of your own accord?—I do.

94. What are you?—I am out of employment at the present time.

95. *Mr. Lowther.*] What was your employment?—I was engaged some time in the City in an insurance broker's office.

96. *Chairman.*]

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

96. *Chairman.*] Were you employed to get up signatures to these petitions?—
I was.

97. Who employed you?—Mr. Hallett.

98. Was the remuneration agreed upon?—Yes.

99. How were you to be paid?—I was to be paid 4 s. per hundred signatures.

100. *Mr. Lowther.*] Was that agreement in writing?—No.

101. *Chairman.*] Were you paid?—I was paid.

102. How much did you receive?—I could not tell you definitely, but I should think I received about 3 l. to 3 l. 10 s.

103. *Mr. Lowther.*] Did you give a receipt for the money?—No.

104. *Chairman.*] This is the Haggerston petition?—Yes.

105. It was presented to the House upon the 6th of April?—I could not say the date.

106. But on what date were you employed?—I could not tell you that exactly.

107. Do you recognise this (*handing to the Witness the Haggerston petition to the House upon the 6th of April*) as that petition?—Yes.

108. *Mr. Lowther.*] Whose is the first name upon the petition?—Walter Pearce.

109. Did you receive that top part, the heading of the petition?—Yes, with the sheets.

110. How did you begin your business; you received that top part first, and somebody told you to get signatures to it; was that so?—Yes, with the blind sheets; they gave me the sheets without any writing upon to obtain signatures, and to have the heading signed.

111. Did you know what it was for?—I knew what it was for; but I have never known anything at all about political matters, and did not know the real sound value of it.

112. And Mr. Hallett told you to get as many signatures as you could?—He told me to get the signatures, but he told me they must be *bona fide*.

113. *Alderman John O'Connor.*] What were you to get the signatures for?—For the continuation of the coal and wine dues.

114. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] And you did not get a single one to that petition?—I did not.

115. You went off at once and wrote them out?—I wrote them out.

116. *Chairman.*] Did you take any directory or book?—I wrote them from a directory.

117. If you look at the Haggerston petition you will find a smear; did you smear them?—They are smeared. I folded them up when they were wet.

118. Did you fold them up expressly for that purpose when they were wet?—I folded them up when they were wet. I wrote the names down and folded the paper up directly afterwards.

119. It was not done to escape detection, was it?—No.

120. *Mr. Tollemache.*] These names and addresses are taken out of the directory, you say?—Yes.

121. *Chairman.*] Do you know anything of Mr. Carlton Roberts; have you ever come into communication with him?—No.

122. Do you know him?—Yes, I know him, but I had nothing to do with him in this affair.

123. You have had nothing to do with him in this affair?—Not in the least.

124. *Mr. Lowther.*] How came Mr. Hallett to employ you?—Because he knew me. I was a steward at Her Majesty's Theatre at the meeting upon the Home Rule question.

125. When there was an anti-Home Rule demonstration there; was it a meeting against Home Rule?—It was a meeting against Home Rule.

126. Mr. Hallett was very particular in giving you orders?—Yes.

127. That the signatures must be *bona fide*?—Yes.

128. But

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BISHOP.

[Continued.]

128. But he did not say what the consequences would be if they were not?—No.

129. Viscount *Lymington*.] What were the exact words he used to you when he said they must be *bona fide*?—He said, "You are doing nothing, are you?" and I said, "Nothing." And he said, "I have something for you to do. We are getting up a petition for the continuance of the coal and wine dues, if you like to get some signatures," he said, "I will pay you 4s. a hundred, but you will perfectly understand you are to canvass for them, and to get them, and they are to be perfectly *bona fide*."

130. *Chairman*.] So you acted contrary to your instructions?—I did.

131. Mr. *Lowther*.] Did you take any other steps to get signatures besides what you have told the Committee, namely, that you made them yourself; did you take them into a public-house?—No.

132. Are there other petitions of yours?—Yes, I wrote altogether about 1,600 or 1,700.

133. Not petitions, but signatures?—Yes; I wrote from 1,600 to 1,700 signatures.

134. *Chairman*.] Were you employed upon any other petition but the Haggerston petition?—I was employed to get signatures where I could.

135. Mr. *Lowther*.] Were you given other tops of petitions?—Yes.

136. Do you know what became of those petitions?—I got some more signatures; that is to say, I wrote some more; there are only 400 or 500 in the Haggerston petition.

137. You said you got about 1,500 signatures?—I got 1,600 or 1,700 altogether.

138. Where are the other petitions; do you know what became of the other petitions?—I got some in Stoke Newington, if I remember rightly, and some in Hackney; that is about all, I think.

139. *Chairman*.] Did you get any in East London and Dalston?—I forget for the moment.

140. Lower Clapton and Bow?—I got some signatures in Dalston.

141. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] How long was it between the time you received this heading from Mr. Hallett and the time you gave it him back?—I should not like to say definitely; I should think four or five days, but I should not like to say positively.

142. You did nothing all the time. You say in your letter you were in a hurry for the money; now you say you waited four or five days, and then you took it back to Mr. Hallett?—You must perfectly understand that I did not write the 400 or 500 signatures in one day.

143. Then what did you do?—Perhaps I wrote 150 of those 500 one day and 150 the next, so that I should be able to get a round sum at the end of the week.

144. But why did you not try to get them, as you had four or five days to do it in; what were you doing on the other days; what prevented you from going round to get signatures. I do not see what you gained, as you had the time?—I was sure I could get this number of 400 or 500 signatures; but it was very wet at the time.

145. But were you in any other employment?—No.

146. Then you did nothing those days; it was only to save you the trouble of going about to get the signatures?—No, it was to get the money quicker; because I knew I could get the money.

147. But you might as well have gone round to get the signatures; because you did not get the money any quicker?—I think Mr. Hallett engaged me upon the Saturday, and I think I presented these petitions upon the Wednesday.

148. But were you doing nothing upon those four days when you might have gone round; how were you occupying your time?—I was writing these signatures.

149. But

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

149. But that would not take you four days?—I wrote them very carefully.

150. Mr. *Lowther*.] Had you any fear that Mr. Hallett should find out that you had done them yourself?—I had that fear; that was the reason I wrote one different from the other.

151. Was that the reason you did not return these petitions to him directly?
—No.

152. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] Were you required to return them by a given day?
—No.

153. Did Mr. Hallett make any observation as to the speed you had used?
—No.

154. It must have appeared to him that you were very quick about the work?
—He made no remarks whatever.

155. Why did you say, in your letter to the Speaker, that your necessity led you to forge the signatures?—Because it did.

156. How did your necessity lead you to forge the signatures?—Because (if I may be allowed to make a little statement) I had been out of employment for some time.

157. I will quote what you said in your letter to the Speaker: "I was and am in great poverty, having been out of employment for many months; and, without considering the grave offence I was committing, was induced by my necessity to commit the fraud upon the House of Commons and my employer." So I ask you, how did your necessity lead you to forge the signatures; why did your necessity not lead you to do the work legitimately?—Because I knew I could obtain the money to pay my expenses.

158. But, as an honourable Member opposite asked you, why did your necessity not lead you to do the work rather than to forge the signatures?—Because I knew I could not get so many.

159. But you were not bound in time?—I wanted a certain amount of money by Wednesday, I think it was, and I knew very well that if I concocted this thing cleverly I should be able to obtain it; otherwise, if I walked round, I did not suppose I should be able to get half the signatures.

160. You did not test your power of getting signatures in the day at all?
—No.

161. You sat down to write them yourself, as I understand?—Yes.

162. You preferred that. I suppose it was an easier task; but are you sure there was no understanding with your employer as to when you were to bring the petitions back?—None whatever.

163. Then again, you are sure there was no opinion expressed as to the expedition you had used in getting signatures?—No.

164. Viscount *Lynington*.] How do you account for your time; that is the point we want to get at. Did the getting of these 400 signatures occupy the whole of your time from Saturday to Wednesday; Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday?—I should not go out on the Sunday.

165. But still if you were forging the signatures at home, you could have spent the day in that way?—No, I did not put pen to paper on the Sunday.

166. Alderman *John O'Connor*.] You said you made a calculation that you could get about 400; how did you know that when you asked nobody?—No, I did not.

167. Then if you did not go round you did not know what you would get?—I thought that if I went round I would be sure to get the signatures. I did not think I should be doing anybody a serious injury, not knowing the value of the petition throughout, and I thought I could write them all myself.

168. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] You spoke of the period between the Saturday and the Wednesday; was it the Haggerston petition that you struck off during that time?—Yes, I struck off the Haggerston petition during that time.

169. I think there are about 500 signatures to that petition?—There are between 400 and 500.

170. Do you say that Mr. Hallett expressed no surprise, or gave you no praise,

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDDEAD.

[Continued.]

praise, or said nothing about the rapidity with which you got those signatures?—Not that I remember.

171. With regard to the 1,600 or 1,700 signatures you spoke about, were they Haggerston signatures, or not; the first signatures you got?—I think so, but I would not vouch for it.

172. But will you attend to this: you say you got the Haggerston signatures between a particular Saturday and Wednesday?—I did not say particularly; I said I thought it was.

173. But surely you could remember whether you got any other signatures for the petition before that; had you, or had you not; was the Haggerston petition the first, or not; you must remember that; was the Haggerston petition the first that Mr. Hallett employed you on?—If I remember rightly, it was.

174. Was Mr. Hallett the person who employed you and paid you for the whole of these 1,600 or 1,700 signatures?—Yes.

175. But the Haggerston petition was the first you got in between the Saturday and the Wednesday; how long did it take you to get in the remainder of the 1,600 or 1,700?—I think altogether I was employed between three weeks and a month; I would not guarantee that, because I do not remember the dates.

176. How were you paid?—I was paid when I got them in.

177. Mr. *McLagan*.] A lump sum?—When I took the signatures in I was paid.

178. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] How long have you known Mr. Hallett?—About two years.

179. Do you remember how you first became acquainted with him?—I could not tell you how I first became acquainted with him.

180. Do you remember when he first employed you for any purpose?—The first time I think was at the Guildhall; I forget what meeting it was, but there was a meeting at the Guildhall at which he employed me.

181. Were you a steward then?—Yes.

182. What was that meeting at the Guildhall for?—I do not remember; I think it was in connection with Home Rule.

183. You do not remember the object of it; was it about two years ago when you first knew Mr. Hallett?—Yes; it was about two years ago.

184. We would like to know very much how you first came to know Mr. Hallett; were you introduced to him as a person wanting employment, or how was it that you first got to know him?—I forget; I think I was introduced to him by a friend of mine in Hackney.

185. What was his name?—Smith.

186. That is a common name; what is his full name?—Thomas Smith.

187. What is his address?—That I cannot tell you; I do not know.

188. *Chairman*.] I see you give your age in your statement as 23?—Yes.

189. Then when you first knew Mr. Hallett you would be about 21?—I would be about 21, but I do not remember exactly how long I have known him.

190. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] What payment did you receive when you officiated as steward of these meetings; what payment did you get at the Guildhall meeting, of which you do not remember the object?—I think it was 4s.

191. How long had you been out of employment when Mr. Hallett gave you this job?—About 10 months, I should think.

192. How have you been supporting yourself?—I am living in lodgings; my brother supported me part of the time, and when his means failed him my landlady has allowed me to run my bill on.

193. Is this 1,600 or 1,700 signatures, taking them altogether, the first time you have been employed by anybody to get signatures to a petition?—It is.

194. Did you go to Mr. Hallett and ask him for this employment, or did he come to you?—He met me.

195. Where?—In Mare-street, Hackney, and he asked me if I was doing anything, as I said before; I said, No.

196. And

4th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

196. And you have told the Committee that you are acquainted with Mr. Carlton Roberts, but not in connection with this matter?—I know him, but not in connection with this matter. I have seen him; I do not know him personally.

197. Do you mean to say you have never spoken to him?—Never.

198. *Chairman.*] You merely know him by sight, but have had no personal communication with him?—No, I only knew him through this matter. This is the first time I have ever spoken to him. I have seen him, of course.

199. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] But I thought you said that you did not know him in connection with this matter?—Only that I have spoken to him since this sad affair, as I may call it.

200. What has passed between you upon this matter lately?—I told him I should make a clean breast of the matter, and that he could find me at my residence; that I should not in any way endeavour to get out of it, but the best thing I thought I could do would be to make a clean breast of it.

201. But how did you come to him?—I saw him at the City agent's office, Mr. Wragg; that is the first time I saw him.

202. Where is Mr. Wragg's office?—In Great St. Helens.

203. Who told you to go to Mr. Wragg's office to meet Mr. Carlton Roberts?—I did not go to meet Mr. Carlton Roberts; I went before Mr. Wragg.

204. *Chairman.*] And there you met Mr. Roberts, did you?—Yes.

205. *Viscount Lynton.*] Who induced you to go to Mr. Carlton Roberts?—I was fetched; my employer, Mr. Hallett, fetched me.

206. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] When was that?—About a week or ten days ago; I could not say exactly.

207. *Mr. Tollemache.*] That was after this matter had been mentioned in public?—It was after the Haggerston affair.

208. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] When was the last time you got any employment or any money from Mr. Hallett before these petitions?—The last time was at Her Majesty's Theatre, and that was a considerable time back. I had 5s. on that occasion.

209. For being a steward?—Yes.

210. *Alderman John O'Connor.*] Have you got any money from Mr. Hallett or anybody else in connection with these petitions during the last fortnight?—No.

211. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] What time did you receive the last sum of money?—I could not guarantee it.

212. Was it within the last month?—Yes, within the last month.

213. *Mr. Lowther.*] Did I understand you to say, in answer to an honourable Member, that you could have got the signatures if you had tried?—I thought to myself, "If I go round I shall get them, but I shall not get them so quick." I thought, "It is all one and the same thing: I am doing nobody any personal injury;" that is what I looked at. I did not give it any contemplation that I was committing a fraud.

214. I forget whether you have been employed upon this sort of work before?—No, I never had anything to do with political matters before, except as a steward.

215. What were your duties?—Simply to take the tickets, and to show the ladies and gentlemen to their respective seats in the stalls.

216. *Viscount Lynton.*] You have told the Committee that Mr. Hallett brought you before Mr. Wragg; did Mr. Hallett go and see you?—Mr. Hallett fetched me.

217. Fetched you from your lodgings?—Yes.

218. *Mr. Tollemache.*] You had not communicated with him; you heard that there was some discussion about this petition which was said to be forged; did you go to Mr. Hallett, or did he come to you?—He came down and fetched me one morning to Mr. Wragg.

219. *Viscount*

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

219. Viscount *Lynnington*.] What did Mr. Hallett say to you when he came and fetched you?—He said, "You have got to come down, and go before Mr. Wragg to give your evidence about this matter."

220. *Chairman*.] Is Mr. Wragg a solicitor?—Yes.

221. Or a political agent?—I think he is both.

222. Mr. *McLagan*.] Did you say he was solicitor to the Corporation?—I said he was a City agent; he is a solicitor likewise.

223. May I ask you where you wrote that letter to the Speaker?—I wrote that letter to the Speaker at the Hackney Conservative Club, in the Glenarm-road.

224. Not in Mr. Wragg's office?—No.

225. Had you a copy of that letter before you?—I had not.

226. You wrote it entirely from your own ideas?—I wrote it entirely from my own ideas.

227. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Are you a member of the Hackney Conservative Club?—I am not a member of the Hackney Conservative Club, but I go there with my brother.

228. Mr. *McLagan*.] Where were you employed before?—At Messrs. De Bernaldes and Co. 47 Cornhill, large insurance brokers; the French companies having lost a lot of money through losing the English risks, they were obliged to withdraw their agencies; when I went there there were 30 clerks, and when I left, I left two behind me.

229. Were you engaged anywhere after that?—Yes, I was engaged after that by another insurance broker, Mr. Baker, in the Royal Exchange Avenue; I left there to better myself, but I gave notice to leave before I had really got the second situation, so I jumped out of the frying pan into the fire, as it were. I had not got the second situation before I left the first.

230. Have you any certificates from those employers at all?—No; but I can refer you to them.

231. The question has been put to you more than once, why did you not go round and get signatures, instead of sitting down to write them yourself; is it the fact that you were idly inclined?—No. I thought I could get more money.

232. And you tried to disguise the signatures as you wrote them?—I did.

233. Now let me ask you a question about how you got the signatures; the Haggerston petition you got the signature for first?—Yes.

234. You then took Stoke Newington; I think you mentioned that, and got the signatures there next?—Yes, I took that in.

235. Now I will take the Hackney and Homerton petition, presented by Sir Guyer Hunter, upon the 23rd of March. (*The Petition was exhibited to the Witness.*)

236. Do you recognise your handwriting there?—Yes, that is my petition.

237. Do you recognise that the whole of the signatures are yours?—Most of them; I took a great deal of pains in doing this; I would not swear to any of those, but a great many of them were mine.

238. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] Were you assisted by anybody?—No, I was not.

239. Then how could you not swear to all that are there?—I would not swear that they are all mine, but they look like them.

240. Mr. *McLagan*.] Do you observe how the sheets are pasted together; will you take any sheet, and see if all the signatures on that particular sheet are yours?—I will refer to it.

241. Alderman *John O'Connor*.] Did you paste the sheets together yourself?—No, Mr. Roberts would have done that.

242. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Is the heading to the petition, the prayer of the petition, written by yourself in any case?—No.

243. Upon the first sheet that contains the petition there must be at least one signature; did you write the first signature in each case?—Yes.

244. Mr. *McLagan*.] Will you answer that question about the separate sheets, because

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

Continued.

because I want to know whether there was any other person employed besides yourself in getting the signatures?—No.

245. You say you wrote some of these signatures, are all the signatures you wrote together in one sheet?—Yes, I am going through the sheets, and I will recognise mine.

The Witness having examined the petition from end to end,—

Witness.] Those are my sheets.

246. The whole of them?—Yes, the whole of them.

247. How many signatures are there in the Hackney petition?—Two hundred and eighty-one.

The Bow petition presented on the 23rd March, being handed to the Witness.

248. Do you recognise your own signatures there?—Yes, that is another of my sheets.

249. Who is that petition presented by?—Captain Colomb.

250. Did you sign all these?—Yes.

251. Mr. *Lowther.*] Did you sign Lewis Levi?—Yes, those are my sheets.

252. All of them?—Yes.

253. *Chairman.*] You were asked by an honourable Member whether you signed the name of Lewis Levi?—If it is there I did; I wish to tell you everything, I do not wish to get out of anything, but I wish to tell you the truth; I am very sorry I have done it.

The signature of Lewis Levi being exhibited to the Witness.

254. Mr. *McLagan.*] Did you sign that?—Yes.

255. Mr. *Tollemache.*] And you signed the signature to the prayer in that case?—Yes.

256. Mr. *Lowther.*] Were you particular about putting down the exact address?—Yes, I copied it as it was.

257. Mr. *Tollemache.*] What directory did you use?—A suburban directory.

258. I see Mr. "Baynes" does not live at the address you put him down at?—I did not take it from that directory (the Post Office London Directory); I took it from a suburban directory.

259. I have 10, Campbell-road, Bow, as the address for which you put down Mr. Baynes; was it a directory of this year?—Yes, it was a directory of this year.

260. Mr. *Lowther.*] You procured the paper for yourself, did you not?—Do you mean to write on?

261. Yes?—No, it was given to me.

262. And you were told that you were to get the signatures to the petition; you did not see the heading of the petition, did you?—I had that given to me, but I never read it.

263. Viscount *Lymington.*] Who gave you the paper?—Mr. Hallett.

264. You say you signed the whole of the Haggerston petition?—Yes.

265. The whole of the names?—Yes.

266. Then also as regards the Hackney and the East London petition presented on the 24th of March, you say on oath that you signed every one of the signatures there?—Yes.

267. Colonel *Bridgeman.*] Is that your signature (*exhibiting a signature to the Witness*)?—It is not.

268. This is a petition of the ratepayers of Lower Clapton presented by Sir Guyer Hunter, on 21st March 1887: "William Lee, 20, Unswick-road, Lower Clapton;" is that your signature?—No, it is not.

269. Is this your signature (*pointing to a signature*)?—No, it is not, I think. I really cannot say.

270. You

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BINMEAD.

[Continued.]

270. You cannot swear whether you wrote any of that or not; recollect you are on your oath; you say you did not write the first signature, and that you did write all the others; is that what you say?—Yes.

271. *Chairman.*] William Lee is upon the first sheet; that you did not sign, but you signed all the rest?—That is so; I signed all the rest.

272. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] You received this heading from Mr. Hallett?—Yes.

273. With that signature upon it?—No, not with that signature upon it.

274. Then who did write it?—The man himself.

275. You swear that William Lee, of No. 20, Urswick road, wrote that signature?—I gave it to him to do. He did not write his name then, but afterwards he said, "Very well, I will take it."

276. *Mr. Lowther.*] You know William Lee?—Yes, I know Lee. I took the petition to him. I had it in my pocket, and I asked him to sign it. He said, "Very well, I will sign it for you;" so he took it home.

277. And he brought it you the next day?—I saw him outside his house the next day when he was going to the City.

278. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] The petition was away from your possession for one day?—Yes.

279. He took it away one day?—Yes.

280. And he gave you that back signed the next day?—Yes.

281. *Mr. Lowther.*] And then you got the signatures which you added to it yourself?—Yes.

282. *Mr. M'Lagan.*] (*After exhibiting the first signature appended to the Hackney and East London Petition.*) Did you sign that?—Yes.

283. *Viscount Lyndington.*] But you have already admitted that you signed everyone of those?—Yes.

284. *Mr. M'Lagan.*] I wish to know if you signed the first signature, and I intend to follow that up by asking you whether when you received the first sheets of these petitions, there was any signature upon anyone of them?—No, not upon anyone of them.

285. *Mr. Lowther.*] Could you give me the date when you went to see Mr. Wriggle?—I could not say what day it was exactly; it was a short time ago.

286. It is not very long ago?—No, it is not; but it is of no use my saying I remember if I do not.

The Hackney and Dalston Petition presented by Sir Lewis Pelly on the 16th of March, was exhibited to the Witness.

287. Have you seen this petition before?—I have seen this petition before.

288. *Viscount Lyndington.*] Did you sign every name of that petition?—Yes.

The Hackney and Dalston Petition presented by Mr. Joseph Howard on the 16th of March, was exhibited to the Witness.

Witness.] That is all mine.

289. *Mr. Lowther.*] All of it?—I did not look at the last sheet.

The Witness having unrolled it to examine the last sheet.

Witness.] Yes, all of it.

The Petition from Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland, presented by Sir James M'Carel-Hogg on the 25th of April, was exhibited to the Witness.

Witness.] I shall have to look into this Petition very carefully before I swear. (*After examining the signatures*) the first signature is not my writing.

The Witness put marks upon certain sheets.

Witness.] I am marking those which are mine. The first sheet of signatures

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

signatures has nothing to do with me in the slightest, and the prayer sheet is not mine.

Out of this Petition there were three sheets which the Witness marked with a cross as having written the signatures himself.

290. Mr. *Loewther*.] There are only three sheets of signatures which are yours?—Yes; there are three which are mine.

291. How many signatures would there be in them?—There are about 120 upon these three sheets.

292. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] I should like to know more particularly about your first acquaintance with Mr. Hallett; you said you were introduced to him by a friend of yours named Thomas Smith?—If I recollect rightly, it is some time ago.

293. Who is Thomas Smith?—That I cannot tell you.

294. I think you said that his christian name is Thomas?—Yes.

295. You do not know what his occupation is?—No, I have not seen him for a considerable time.

296. About what age is he?—He is about 26 or 27, I should think.

297. You do not know what his occupation was at that time?—I do not know.

298. How was it you met Thomas Smith at that time?—Amongst other friends.

299. Was he a friend of Mr. Hallett's also?—I should imagine he was; I did not really know his affairs.

300. Surely it was a circumstance of some importance, in your position, to be introduced to Mr. Hallett; it is not a thing that occurs every day; could you remember what that occasion was?—There was no occasion at all, so far as I recollect; I really put no account upon the matter at all. I think I was walking with Thomas Smith and he met Mr. Hallett, and Thomas Smith introduced me, if I recollect rightly; it was merely a casual introduction; I did not take much notice of it.

301. Although you made so much impression upon Mr. Hallett that he shortly afterwards gave you employment?—I do not know; it was not shortly afterwards.

302. How was it you were employed the first time by Mr. Hallett?—(After pausing to consider) I saw him; I knew he had something to do with the election in Hackney.

303. *Chairman*.] Was it a Parliamentary Election or a School Board Election?—I do not know what it was exactly; it was an election at the Town Hall; a Parliamentary Election, I think.

304. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] How long ago was this?—I do not recollect exactly. Either somebody mentioned my name to him, I think that was it, or somebody told him.

305. Told him what; this is important, you know?—I think somebody told him, if I remember correctly, that I was doing nothing, and could be doing something for me, as the election was about to take place; it was thought very likely that I might get some work upon the election.

306. Who was it that recommended you?—I could not recollect, but somebody recommended me. My brother told me that Mr. Hallett wanted to see me; he was then at the election rooms in the Amherst-road, Hackney. He simply wanted to see my handwriting, and in case anything came in the way he would give me some employment.

307. Then he employed you at the meeting?—Yes, as a steward, to take tickets at the door.

308. *Chairman*.] But you say he wanted to see your handwriting?—That was another occasion; that was at the election. I was doing nothing, knocking about, and somebody, I suppose, put in a kind word for me. My brother told me, "Mr. Hallett wants to see you; he, perhaps, can do something for you." I went round to see him in the morning, and asked him if he would kindly remember me. I gave him my address, and left him.

309. What is your brother?—He is in a merchant's office in the City.

0.73.

B 4

310. Does

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

310. Does he know Mr. Hallett?—No, I do not think so.

311. Then how did he know that Mr. Hallett wanted to see you?—I do not know; I cannot recollect. In fact, we do not go into particulars in these matters; and if I had known that I should have been examined about the matter, I would have laid myself out to get the particulars.

312. This, you say, was about two years ago?—Yes.

313. Now you say you are living from hand to mouth, or knocking about; have you been out of employment altogether as long as two years?—I have been out of employment for 10 months altogether now. I was out of employment before then.

314. But two years ago were you in the employment of an insurance broker?—No, I was out of employment two years ago, again.

315. How long were you employed previous to that 10 months before you were out of employment?—I was in the insurance office in Cornhill for three to three and a half years, or something like that; and then I went to an oleograph manufacturers in the City-road. They went into the Bankruptcy Court. From there I was out of a berth, I think, about four or five months; and then I went to this insurance office in the Royal Exchange Avenue, and I was there about 15 months; after that I was in Covent Garden Market as a salesman's clerk.

316. But you are not able to tell the Committee what led Mr. Hallett to seek you out upon that occasion when he told you to give him a specimen of your handwriting?—I am not able to tell you.

317. Mr. *Lowther*.] Did he get a specimen of your handwriting?—I think so. He said, "Give me your name and address."

318. Mr. *Crawford*.] But you did not tell the Committee who recommended you?—No, I did not trouble about it. I said to myself, "Now I have got a stroke of luck; I will go and see him"; it did not put me about in the slightest.

319. Viscount *Lynnington*.] Does your brother know who recommended you to Mr. Hallett?—No; I should say that he would have forgotten all about the matter entirely now.

320. Does he live with you now?—Yes.

321. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] When you were employed by Mr. Hallett about the signatures, where did you go to see Mr. Hallett?—At his house.

322. Is it a private house, or an office?—A private house.

323. When was the introduction to Mr. Hallett?—I could not tell you when.

324. There is a little confusion of dates. First you say two years ago, and then you say you do not know?—It would be about two years ago.

325. Have you no recollection of the first occasion upon which you saw Mr. Hallett?—The first occasion upon which I saw Mr. Hallett, as I said before, was in Mare-street, Hackney.

326. How often had you seen him about this business, about the petitions, before this?—I should have fallen across him casually, perhaps, once a fortnight, or something of that kind.

327. But you do not see a man of business casually; there must have been some occasion for you to have seen him?—I had no occasion to see him; I had nothing to do.

328. Mr. *Lowther*.] Do you mean, when you say you saw him casually, that you went to see him, or that he met you?—I saw him casually; I just passed the time of day, and said, "How do you do."

329. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] How did he know you were out of occupation?—Because I told him so. I told him, "Any time you can lend me a helping hand I should be very grateful."

330. Now let me ask you another question: Do you know anybody else whom Mr. Hallett employed in the same way about the petitions?—No.

331. Have you heard of anyone whom he has employed in the same way since this question arose?—No.

332. Now

6th May, 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

332. Now, about when did you go to Mr. Wragg?—It would be about a week or 10 days ago, as near as I can recollect; I cannot tell the day.

333. But you have remembered a number of things, and I should think you would have remembered that. This is the 6th of May; when do you think, as far as you can recollect, the visit to Mr. Wragg occurred?—I will try and think, as near as I possibly can, what time it was. (*The Witness paused to consider.*)

334. As far as you know, what day of the week was it that you went to Mr. Wragg?—I should think it was last Wednesday fortnight.

335. But you said a week or 10 days ago?—I am going into it accurately. I said I thought about a week or 10 days ago.

336. Did Mr. Hallett come to you, or send for you?—He came for me.

337. Why did he say you were to go to Mr. Wragg?—He said that I had to go to Mr. Wragg; to go before him to give my evidence about this Haggerston Petition. I said I was perfectly willing to do that.

338. What had Mr. Wragg to do in the matter?—I do not know in the slightest.

339. Were not you surprised at being summoned to go before a man who, as far as you knew, had nothing to do with the matter?—No, not at all. I knew Mr. Wragg was the City agent, and I thought it only natural that he might have been employed to go into this matter for the House of Commons.

340. What is Mr. Wragg?—He works on behalf of the Conservative cause in the City of London.

341. I want you to tell us what passed at Mr. Wragg's?—I simply sat down and told him, as I am doing now, and he asked me about my evidence; he cross-examined me.

342. About what did he cross-examine you?—About this Haggerston Petition.

343. Was that in reference to the signatures?—Yes.

344. Viscount Lynton.] Was there any third person present besides yourself and Mr. Wragg?—Yes, Mr. Roberts was there and Mr. Hallett; they were all three together.

345. Chairman.] Mr. Wragg and Mr. Hallett were both there?—Yes.

346. Who suggested your writing to the Speaker?—Myself. I asked the question first of all; I said, "I have done something that I am very sorry for, and I should like to be able to see Lord Claud Hamilton himself first, so that I might make an open statement of it." He said, "No, you could not do that; you might write to the Speaker."

347. Who said that?—Mr. Hallett.

348. When did Mr. Hallett say that?—Directly after the meeting with Mr. Wragg.

349. Then I repeat the question, who suggested your writing to the Speaker?—I suggested it; I asked the question; I asked would it be advisable.

350. Chairman.] I understood you to say that you said you would like to see Lord Claud Hamilton, and they said you could not do it; but that you might write to the Speaker?—Yes.

351. Mr. Dalrymple.] That is the question I have been asking you: who suggested that you should write to the Speaker?—Mr. Hallett, but upon my own recommendation.

352. How did you know how to address the Speaker; it is not everybody who knows how to address an official; who told you?—My own education, I should think.

353. Very few people know. Many people live long lives and never know how to address high officials, and I am surprised that you should know; how did you know how to address the Speaker; how did you know that he was "The Right Honourable," that he was a member of the Privy Council?—I thought that was the right way.

354. Was it Mr. Hallett who instructed you to write to the Speaker?—I suggested it myself. I said to him, I should like to see Lord Claud Hamilton,

6th May 1887.]

MR. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

and he said, "You could not do that; you might write to the Speaker;" at least he said that it would be a good idea.

355. Do you mean to say you wrote of your own accord to the Speaker?—Yes.

356. After all that has passed in this room, do you say that the letter to the Speaker was your own idea, and that you knew of your own knowledge how to address the Speaker?—I wrote the letter first of all and I showed it to Mr. Hallett; I said, "Is that right; do you think that is a good letter? That is my idea upon the subject; do you think that is correct?" He said, "That will do very well." One or two alterations I daresay there might have been.

357. Were the terms of the letter to the Speaker all your own?—Yes, my own words all the way through.

358. Were the terms of the letter to the Speaker your own all the way through?—Yes, it was all my own composition.

359. Was the wording of the letter all your own?—Yes.

360. *Chairman.*] And was the address all your own?—Yes.

361. *Mr. Delrymple.*] You submitted the letter so written to Mr. Hallett?—Yes, I showed it to Mr. Hallett.

362. And it was thought, I suppose, that that apology would end the matter?—No, I did not think so. I never thought that it would end the matter at all. I never thought for one moment that it would; but I thought it was best to write the letter and make a clean breast of the matter.

363. The letter to the Speaker only related to the Haggerston Petition; have you seen Mr. Wragg again since then?—No.

364. Then there has been no apology to the House of Commons in reference to the other petition?—No, that was the only petition I was accused of; I have now owned to the others.

365. You have been very candid about a good many matters; now let me ask you this: when did you tell Mr. Hallett that you had forged the signatures?—When we were going up in the train to see Mr. Wragg.

366. What did he say? It was upon the day you were summoned to go to Mr. Wragg that you told him so, as I understand you?—Yes.

367. What did he say?—He said that it was a very very unpleasant business, and that he was very sorry I had committed myself in such a way. He thought he could have trusted me, and that it would not only be disagreeable for me, but that it would be disagreeable for all parties concerned.

368. Then it was upon that same day that he authorised your writing to the Speaker?—Yes, I spoke to him after I had seen Mr. Wragg. When I was questioned by Mr. Wragg I saw the grave offence I had committed, and I wanted to take steps, I did not know what really to do, and that led up to my asking him if I could see Lord Clarendon Hamilton.

369. Did Mr. Wragg approve of the affair of writing to the Speaker?—He knew nothing about it; it was a second consideration; it was after I had left his office that that was thought about.

370. Did you leave the office with Mr. Hallett?—No.

371. How soon after the visit to Mr. Hallett did you write the letter to the Speaker?—Two or three days, I think; I cannot remember the date; I think I saw Mr. Wragg on the Wednesday.

372. What Wednesday?—I think it was about last Wednesday fortnight, if my mind serves me.

373. It was on the day that you went to Mr. Wragg with Mr. Hallett that you told Mr. Hallett you had forged the signatures?—Yes; when I was going up in the train.

374. And it was upon the day you visited Mr. Wragg with Mr. Hallett that it was decided that you were to write to the Speaker?—Yes, that is right.

375. What was the date of your letter to the Speaker?—That I cannot tell you; I ought to have taken a copy of it.

376. *Mr. Tollemache.*] But it was not written the same day as you were at Mr. Wragg's?—It was not written the same day as I was at Mr. Wragg's.

377. How long after that do you think it was?—I think it was the day after.

378. Mr.

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDDEAD.

[Continued.]

378. Mr. *Dabrympie*.] Did Mr. Wragg know of your letter to the Speaker?—No.

379. It was only Mr. Hallett who approved of your writing to the Speaker; have you seen Mr. Wragg since you wrote to the Speaker?—No.

380. You have not seen him about the other petitions?—No; I was only accused of the Haggerston Petition; that is all I was brought up for.

381. Now, I will ask you one more question; as I understand, you received all these headings of the petitions from Mr. Hallett?—Yes.

382. All of them?—Yes.

383. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] When you confessed to Mr. Hallett, going up in the train, that you had forged the signatures to the Haggerston petition, did he ask you anything about the thousand other signatures which you had obtained for him practically about the same time?—No, not that I recollect.

384. He did not ask you whether those signatures were genuine or not?—I do not think so; wait a minute. (*After consideration.*) Yes, he did; I recollect now.

385. Did you say that they were, or that they were not?—Which; the other ones?

386. Yes, the other ones?—I said the other ones that I had done, the best part of them were fictitious; and I expressed at the same time that he would always be able to find me; that I would see the matter through.

387. You told him that you would see the matter through?—Yes, that I would see the matter through; that I would make a clean breast of it.

388. Then, the course of writing to the Speaker was taken at his suggestion; you showed him the letter, and, as I understand, he said that it would do, with some alterations; you said something about some alterations?—I said there may have been some alterations.

389. And those alterations were made by Mr. Hallett?—If I did not word it properly; I think, as far as I recollect, he suggested that I should make some alterations; I recollect, however, that I did not make the alterations myself; I did not write anything fresh.

390. I understand Mr. Hallett at that time knew, by your confession, that you had forged several other signatures to petitions at the same time?—Yes.

391. When he advised you to write to the Speaker, making a full confession with regard to the Haggerston Petition, he did not advise you to make any reference to the other petitions?—But I do not refer to the Haggerston petition alone in that letter to him, do I; I forget, really.

392. You say "My attention has been called to the inquiry now before the House of Commons in relation to the petition of ratepayers of Haggerston, and it is with great shame and sorrow that I feel it my duty to state that such petition was one entirely concocted by me, and in express opposition to the instructions of Mr. Hallett who employed me to collect the signatures of ratepayers and others in the neighbourhood." So that Mr. Hallett's name is expressly mentioned in this letter, he having seen it, "who employed me." Now the question we want to ask you is this: when you and Mr. Hallett had this letter under consideration, how did it happen that no reference, in writing to the Speaker, was made to the other forged petitions which you forged at the same time; can you give any explanation of that?—No.

393. Mr. *Lawther*.] You knew that there were other petitions with false names to them?—Yes.

394. Mr. Hallett also knew that there were other petitions with forged names to them, did he not?—I told him at the time.

395. Therefore you both knew it?—Yes.

396. Did you both decide that you would not say anything about it?—Oh, dear no; I said I was perfectly willing, as I said before, to carry the matter right through.

397. What do you mean by "carrying the matter right through"?—That if I was called upon at any moment to do as I have done now, to come before the House, I would do so, and make a clean breast of it.

6th May 1887.]

Mr. RIDGEAD.

[Continued.]

398. Mr. *Lewther*.] That you would take the whole blame of it?—That I would recognise my own writing, which I have done.

399. He said it would be disagreeable for all parties concerned; did Mr. Hallett say that?—Mr. Hallett said it was a very unfortunate affair, and that it would make things disagreeable for all parties concerned.

400. What did you understand by that?—That I had committed an offence which would cause a great deal of trouble; I was very sorry for it.

401. That you would get into a scrape?—Yes, that I would get into a scrape.

402. And that Mr. Hallett would?—I do not know that; in fact, I had troubled about nobody else but myself.

403. Was he troubled about it; about himself?—Yes, he was, very.

404. Did he say to you that you had got him into trouble?—He said to me: "You have got me into a nice bit of trouble, after my telling you to get *bound fide* signatures, and then for you to go and get forgeries, is a great breach of trust."

405. Mr. *Tollemache*.] I want to ask you this. The first you heard of this business was, that Mr. Hallett came and fetched you?—Of which?

406. Of there being something wrong with the petitions; he took you to the City?—Yes.

407. Did he ask you whether the petitions were true or false on that occasion, when you were going in the train together?—Yes, he asked me.

408. What did you tell him?—I told him they were false; I told him the Haggerston petition was.

409. You wrote him a letter subsequently?—Yes.

410. Mr. *Lewther*.] Did you write Mr. Hallett a letter?—Yes.

411. What did you tell him?—I told him that the signatures were genuine.

412. You first of all met him in the train, and told him they were forgeries?—No, that was not the first. I wrote him a letter to tell him that the signatures were *bound fide* first of all.

413. Do you remember when that was; that was before you went to Mr. Wragg, was it not?—Yes.

414. At that time had you written to Mr. Hallett to say that they were *bound fide* signatures?—Yes.

415. Then when you were travelling in the train you told him that the letter was false?—Yes. I told him that the letter was false; that it was poverty that made me do it, because I knew that if he knew it he would cut me off, which he did do, anyhow.

416. How came you to tell Mr. Hallett?—Because I heard the day before that there had been a difficulty in Haggerston about it; that they were suspicious about the signatures.

417. The first thing, as I understand you to say, was that Mr. Hallett came and fetched you?—No; Mr. Hallett came up to the Conservative Club, at the Glenarm-road, and if I remember correctly, he said, "I want to speak to you about that petition from Haggerston; do you know anything about it?" I said, "No." He said, "I must tell you the signatures are fictitious, every one that you presented me with." So I said they were not. He said, "If they are not fictitious, then give me a letter in your handwriting to say that they are not fictitious;" and I wrote him a letter to say that the things were *bound fide*.

418. Did you go down the same day with him?—Do I understand you to mean to the City?

419. Yes?—Not the same day.

420. The day before or after?—After I wrote the letter I went to the City.

421. And there you confessed that the signatures were fictitious?—Yes; I thought the better plan for me would be that it would be only just and right that I should make a clear statement of it; those signatures to the Haggerston petition I forged.

422. What made you alter your mind about it?—My own conscience made me alter my mind.

423. *Chairman*.] Your conscience was awakened at last?—Yes, I did not really

6th May 1887.]

MR. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

really think of it; I wrote those signatures without a moment's reflection; I did not think that I was committing any offence, so I was perfectly willing to come forward and give my evidence without giving any trouble to anybody.

424. *Mr. Tollemache.*] First of all you denied that; you said they were *bona fide* petitions?—I did not know what to say. I thought if I said yes, he would cut off my money, which he did do, and that I should not get any more work.

425. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] You say you thought it was no offence; then why did you at once write the letter to say that they were *bona fide*, because that looks as though you thought it was a very serious offence?—I'll tell you what I thought, I thought it was simply a stir in his own imagination, because I had seen nothing in the newspapers.

426. *Chairman.*] You thought he was unnecessarily alarmed?—Yes, that is what I thought.

427. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] Was Mr. Hallett by you when you wrote that letter to the Speaker; was he at the Conservative Club?—He was at the club, but he was not by me.

428. *Chairman.*] This letter was written in the club, was it not?—It was.

429. On club paper?—Yes.

430. *Mr. Mulholland.*] You showed the letter to Mr. Hallett?—Yes.

431. In the club?—Yes.

432. When you wrote it?—Yes.

433. You wrote it from the club upon club paper, so that he might know you belonged to the Conservative Club?—No, but so that he might know the address.

434. You wrote it at the Conservative Club, but you dated it from your own address?—Yes.

435. *Viscount Lynton.*] The petitions, not the Haggerston petition, but the other petitions had already been sent in when you made that confession to Mr. Hallett in the train?—They had already been sent in, yes.

436. *Mr. Dobrymple.*] How do you know that?—They were sent in by me to him; he had already received them from me.

437. *Viscount Lynton.*] I meant sent in to the House of Commons?—That I do not know; that was not my business.

438. I want to arrive at the exact date when you made the confession to Mr. Hallett in the railway train?—I could not tell you the date; I should imagine, and fancy in my own mind, that it was a Wednesday.

439. Was it at least a fortnight ago?—I should think so, quite a fortnight ago; I have no advantage in telling you anything that is not truth; if I remembered the date I would tell you in a moment. I believe I can tell you the exact date upon which I went to see Mr. Wragg. (*After consideration.*) It was last Tuesday week; I could almost swear that that was the day, as near as I could state it.

440. *Chairman.*] That is when you made the confession?—Yes.

441. *Viscount Lynton.*] That would be the 26th of April?—I will not swear it was that day, but that is as near as I can get it.

442. *Mr. Lowther.*] Did Mr. Hallett examine the petition himself?—Do you mean when I took them in to him?

443. Yes?—Yes, he looked them through; he said: "Do you say these are *bona fide*?" I said, "Yes," and what he did with them afterwards I do not know.

444. *Mr. Tollemache.*] Who drew up this statement that you have sent in and signed?—Which statement do you refer to?

445. The statement that Mr. Hallett engaged you upon such and such a day?—That I know nothing at all about.

0.73.

c 3

446. It

6th May 1887.]

Mr. BIDMEAD.

[Continued.]

446. It is signed by you?—But this is a copy; that is my statement; Mr. Wragg drew that up himself.

447. All you did was to sign it?—He said, "Will you sign this?" and I signed it.

448. Mr. Lowther.] He read it over to you?—Yes, he read it over to me.

449. Have you made any other statements in writing?—No.

450. Colonel Bridgeman.] I should like a definite answer about the seven petitions, to know if the signatures are yours; is that your signature (*exhibiting an individual signature*)?—No, that is not mine.

451. Mr. Mulholland.] You stated that in the forms of the petitions that were sent to you there was no signature attached to them?—No.

452. Those that you said were not your signatures must have been attached to the forms which were sent to you?—No, they were not upon my route. Poplar, and the East India Dock-road, and those places I have not touched; they are not my petitions.

453. Mr. Donald Crawford.] Who is upon that route?—I do not know; I have not the slightest idea.

The Witness was directed to remain in the room pending the further examination of Witnesses.

MR. JOHN WALTER HALLETT, called in; Sworn and Examined.

454. Chairman.] WHERE do you reside?—I reside at 3, Chatham-place, Hackney.

455. What is your profession; what do you call yourself?—I am a political agent.

456. Were you engaged in the matter of these petitions upon the coal and wine duties?—Yes.

457. Did you engage the last witness, Mr. Bidmead, to get signatures?—Yes, I engaged Mr. Bidmead to get signatures.

458. Was the rate of reward arranged then; that is, what he was to have?—Yes.

459. What was he to have?—I promised him 4 s. per 100.

460. Did you give him directions to take care that the signatures were genuine?—My instructions to him were that the signatures were to be *bona fide* signatures, and that each person could only sign his name once; I gave him stringent instructions that every one was to be genuine.

461. Did you afterwards receive news from him that they were not; did he communicate to you that they were not genuine?—Not immediately afterwards.

462. But at any time afterwards?—Yes, afterwards he did.

463. What did he say to you?—I taxed him with their not being genuine.

464. Your attention was called to it?—Yes, my attention was called to it, and I taxed him with their not being genuine, and he seemed to be quite hurt.

465. How was your attention called to it?—My attention was called to it by a notice in the newspapers.

466. Which you saw in the proceedings of the House of Commons?—I saw a notice in the newspaper that there was something wrong with the Haggerston petition; I had an idea that it was he that brought it to me, and I asked him as to the genuineness of it, and he seemed to be hurt that I should have thought that they were not genuine; and the next day afterwards I think I had a letter from him saying that he courted any inquiry into the matter.

467. You recollect the first time your attention was called to this matter?—It was about the 18th of April; I will not commit myself to the date, but it was about that time.

468. And the next day you had a note from him, in which he seemed hurt that you should have doubted his word?—Yes; he wrote that letter. I gave it into the hands of Mr. Roberts, and that was all I had to do with it.

469. But

6th May 1887.]

Mr. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

469. But who prepared that statement for him?—Himself, I presume. I am speaking of the letter that he wrote to me personally.

470. Then will you tell us what took place?—I gave that letter into Mr. Roberts's hand; and that was all I had to do with that matter.

471. Did you see him afterwards at Mr. Wragg's office?—I saw him at Mr. Wragg's office.

472. Who suggested that he should go to Mr. Wragg's office; did you?—I did not suggest that he should go to Mr. Wragg's office.

473. Did you go with him there to Mr. Wragg's?—I met him there.

474. Was that by appointment?—Yes, by appointment.

475. Do you know what took place after that?—I can hardly follow what took place.

476. Would you like to tell the Committee *seriatim*, or would you rather answer questions; will you tell us in your own words?—Shall I start from the commencement of it?

477. Will you make your statement?—There was a statement made at Mr. Wragg's office by myself as to this petition, in which I stated that I employed Mr. Bidmead to collect signatures to the petition; and those signatures were to be *hand sde* signatures, which he thoroughly understood; and that his remuneration was to be 4 s. per 100. He brought me in various signatures; I could not say how many; but as soon as they were handed to me I handed them to Mr. Roberts, who employed me in the matter. As soon as they were brought to me I glanced casually down them, and said, "You are quite sure these are genuine," and his invariable answer was, "Yes;" and I impressed it upon him, because I said, "If they are not, you are very likely to get us into a great deal of trouble, and, possibly, get me disgraced as well." I recollect saying that in my own sitting-room. When the Haggerston Petition cropped up I went to him and told him there was a question as to the genuineness of the signatures to the petition. He said, "They are all genuine; every signature I have brought in is genuine, got by me or by somebody I can trust." The next day there was a letter he wrote which I handed to Mr. Roberts (I should like that letter to be produced), in which Mr. Bidmead stated that he would court the fullest inquiry into the matter. With that I gave the letter to Mr. Roberts, and he said, "Yes, that seems very satisfactory;" and of course the matter dropped for some little time. Then I was requested to see Mr. Bidmead again. However, I stopped all employment of him upon this matter, when I thought there was the slightest suspicion attaching to him. Then I saw him again, and he was requested to go up to Mr. Wragg's office, and at Mr. Wragg's office he simply confessed the whole thing.

478. Mr. Dalrymple.] Who suggested his going to Mr. Wragg's office?—It was suggested, I think, by Mr. Roberts, and that I should go also, and I made the same statement there as I have made here. I was asked as to the rate of remuneration, whether I thought it small or large; but that, of course, is irrelevant, I take it, to this inquiry.

479. Mr. Tollemache.] What was the date of the visit to Mr. Wragg?—I am sorry to say I left my pocket-book at home this morning, but I think it was about the 25th or 26th of last month.

480. Chairman.] That was when you went to Mr. Wragg's office?—Yes.

481. Now will you proceed with your statement?—That is all I know of this matter.

482. Were you present when he wrote that letter to the Speaker?—Yes.

483. Who suggested that?—That was at Mr. Roberts' suggestion, I acting upon it. I saw him and asked him to write it.

484. Were you there when he wrote it?—I was.

485. Where was it done?—It was done at the Clapton Park Club, Clapton; I found him there.

486. Mr. Lowther.] Is that a Conservative club?—Yes. He was very willing to

6th May 1887.]

Mr. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

to make a full confession of his guilt after being once taxed with it, and the petition being proved to be a fiction.

487. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] And you saw him write the letter to the Speaker?—Yes.

488. Viscount *Lymington*.] How did you first become acquainted with Mr. Bidmead?—I knew him some two and a-half years ago when he was in a very good position; he was a clerk, I believe, second to the managing clerk in an insurance broker's office in the City; he was doing about 200 l. a year there. Then after a time I saw his brother, who told me that he was very hard up; and then I saw Mr. Wells, who is a fellow election agent of mine, and he said, "If you can find a job for that fellow Bidmead, he is very hard up, and it would be a very kind thing to do;" and I said, "I will send for him, and if I can give him something to do I will." The next day I saw him going through Hackney; I asked him if I could do anything for him, and he was extremely grateful to me for having taken the trouble to find him out and giving him employment.

489. Did Bidmead make a confession to you in the railway train, on his way to Mr. Wragg's office?—Yes; he had previously almost told me; I had my own ideas upon the matter; he had almost confessed it before that.

490. Did he confess it when going with you in the train?—He confessed it in half-a-dozen places.

491. After he had told you that the signatures on the Haggerston Petition were forgeries, did you ask him whether the other petitions which you had committed to his charge also contained forged signatures?—Yes, I did.

492. What was his reply to that?—His answer to that was, that the whole of the petitions, with the exception of the Haggerston ones, were genuine.

493. That was his reply to you in the train, that the Haggerston Petition was the only petition that was fraudulent?—(No answer.)

494. Alderman *John O'Connor*.] You did not say it was in the train?—I did not say it was in the train, but I had to draw this matter from him piecemeal; I said, "In my own mind there is not the slightest doubt about it," and I went round to a number of people. I went round to Mr. Clarke of the "Brownlow Arms," Dalston, who verified one signature, and I went to other addresses and found that people did not live there, and I found the whole of the signatures were so doubtful that I taxed him with their being fraudulent.

495. Viscount *Lymington*.] You taxed him, not only upon the Haggerston Petition, but upon the other petitions?—Yes, I did. I said, "Now, make a clean breast of it; how many have you sent in forged, and how many genuine." He confessed to the Haggerston Petition; he said there had been about 200 forged.

496. You did not press him upon the others?—No, I did not so much, because the Haggerston Petition was the one. I think he said there were 200 that were fraudulent; but I said to him, "I have no doubt in my own mind that the whole of them are fraudulent."

497. But you did not press him as to the others?—I did not; I was not dealing so much with the other petitions then; it was the Haggerston Petition I was dealing with then.

498. He did not deny it?—He could not deny that.

499. But you did not press the others?—No.

500. That letter written to the Speaker was written at the club; the Clapton Park Club you say?—Yes.

501. Under the authority, and more or less under the direction of yourself and Mr. Roberts?—Yes, certainly.

502. Why was it you did not suggest to him that he should mention the other petitions besides the Haggerston Petition?—But he had not confessed upon the other petitions. I could not suggest to a man to write to the House of Commons, confessing to something which I did not know at that time were forgeries.

503. You say you did not press him upon the others?—No, I did not.

504. You only pressed him upon the Haggerston Petition?—Yes, that is all.

505. Mr.

6th May 1887.]

MR. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

505. Mr. Dalrymple.] How many forms of petitions did you give Bidmead to take round?—I could not tell you; I may tell you the *modus operandi*. Mr. Roberts employed me in connection with this matter, and when I received petitions from two or three or four individuals, so I took them back to Mr. Roberts.

506. You say when you received petitions from two or three or four individuals, you took them to Mr. Roberts?—Exactly.

507. Then you had occasion to employ others besides Bidmead?—Yes.

508. Did you stipulate for having the petitions returned to you within a certain time?—Never. I should like to mention one matter which has just occurred to me in connection with this matter. I may say that my remuneration was not according to the number of petitions sent in by me. I was remunerated simply at a salary per week irrespective of any petitions which I sent in.

509. I am not suggesting that there is any mystery. I am only asking as to the course of events about the petitions; have you made any calculation as to the time it takes to get signatures?—No.

510. Were you at all surprised at the rapidity of Bidmead's action?—Not at all.

511. You said that you glanced over the signatures, but that you did not carefully examine them?—I could not say that I carefully examined them, because that is such a wide term. I used a certain amount of discretion, and they appeared to me *bona fide prima facie*.

512. You did not ask Bidmead as to the particular districts which he had traversed?—Yes, I did. I asked him when he brought in any of those sheets to me, "Well, and what district did you do yesterday?" and he said, "I took such and such a district." I said, "How did you work it?" He said he had one man doing one side of the road and one the other; and I, upon that, went so far as to ask him, "What name is that?" referring to any particular signature; and he said, "That was so-and-so," and I thought he was so right that I asked him into my private sitting room before I went to business.

513. You say that you gave him these papers about the 18th of April?—Yes.

514. Where was Bidmead when he first admitted the forgery; upon what date did he first admit the forgery?—I think it was the 20th; the day after Primrose day, I am almost sure.

515. What is Mr. Wragg?—A solicitor, I think.

516. I think you said you did not take Bidmead to Mr. Wragg?—I did not take Bidmead to Mr. Wragg.

517. How came Bidmead to go to Mr. Wragg?—I think I have stated, in answer to the honourable Chairman, that I suggested that he should go to Mr. Wragg.

518. I am not in the least trying to make anything out of that you suggested that he should go to Mr. Wragg; but you did not take him there?—No, I did not.

519. Chairman.] You met him there by appointment?—Yes, I did; at least he had an appointment to be there at a certain time; he was to be there, and I was there too.

520. Mr. Dalrymple.] Then you did not travel together with him?—Yes, we did; now, I remember it; I called at his house, and took him up there with me.

521. Was it upon the way to Mr. Wragg that he gave you information about other petitions than the Haggerston petition?—Yes, I think it was; that was what made me think of it; it was during the time I was in the train with him, going from Hackney Downs.

522. Was Mr. Roberts present at the interview between you and him and Mr. Wragg?—Yes.

523. What was decided upon at that interview with regard to the other petitions?—I do not know.

524. Were not you present?—Yes, I was present. There was a declaration made by Bidmead to the effect that the signatures to the Haggerston petition were

6th May 1887.]

- Mr. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

were forgeries, a declaration by Roberts that he employed me, and there was a declaration made by me on the same lines with my evidence given before this Committee now.

525. What was the date of the visit to Mr. Wragg?—I have stated the date; that it was about the 26th.

526. Was no declaration made upon the occasion of the visit to Mr. Wragg as to the forgeries of the other petitions?—Not while I was in the room; I did not stay; I had some professional business to attend to, and after I had made my declaration, I left.

527. Who was it suggested that a letter should be written to the Speaker?—I cannot tell as to the primary suggestor, but to me it was Mr. Roberts; I know I was told by Mr. Roberts to ask him to write it, but who suggested it I could not say.

528. How soon after the visit to Mr. Wragg was the letter to the Speaker written?—The date would prove it.

529. The letter is dated the 28th?—It would be two or three days.

530. The letter that has just been mentioned has reference only to the Haggerston petition; and I will repeat my question: Why, if it was known at that time that there were other forged petitions besides the Haggerston petition, were they not mentioned in the letter to the Speaker?—I do not know why they were not.

531. But did you not superintend the writing of the letter?—Yes, of that particular letter, acting under instructions.

532. As you were acting under instructions and not upon your own motion, do you know why no mention was made in that letter to the Speaker of the other forged petitions?—I do not know.

533. You knew then that the other petitions were not genuine?—I did not know it.

534. I understood you to say that Bidmead told you so that very day?—He as good as told me, but he did not make a confession such as he did with regard to the Haggerston petition, and I had to jump a good deal to conclusion about the Haggerston petition.

535. But it was not a question of jumping to conclusions about the Haggerston petition when that letter to the Speaker was written?—No, nor prior to that, when he had written to me confessing it.

536. I want to know why no reference was made in the letter to the Speaker of the other forged petitions?—I had nothing whatever to do with the writing of the letter.

537. But who had?—I do not know; I had instructions from Mr. Roberts.

538. Were you furnished with the form of the letter?—I was furnished with the form of the letter for Bidmead to copy; I was entirely an agent in the matter.

539. You were furnished with a form of the letter by Mr. Roberts, and you only superintended the manual labour of the letter being written?—Yes, I was asked whether it would be a good thing, and I said, "Yes, perhaps it will save our being punished." I said, "This is a good thing, I think, if you want to save yourself from getting into trouble, the best thing you can do is to write a copy of this letter."

540. You persuaded Bidmead to write it?—I told him I thought it would be to his interest to write it.

541. Then we understand the form of the letter was supplied by Mr. Roberts, but the actual operation of its being written was done under your superintendence at the Clapton Park Club?—Yes, exactly.

542. Was the letter in Bidmead's own writing?—Exactly; he sat down to the table and wrote it.

543. Is that the letter that is before us now?—I can tell you if it be the letter. (*After seeing the letter to Mr. Speaker.*) Yes, that is the letter.

544. Was the form of that letter furnished by Mr. Roberts?—Yes; by him to me, and by me to Bidmead.

545. Have you preserved the form that Mr. Roberts gave you?—No, I have not; I checked it, and destroyed the form.

546. Mr.

6th May 1887.]

Mr. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

546. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.) Would you tell the Committee when and where Mr. Roberts handed you that form?—It was sent to my house.

547. By post?—No.

548. By hand?—Yes.

549. Was it accompanied by a letter from Mr. Roberts?—Yes.

550. Telling you what to do with it?—Yes.

551. Have you got that letter?—No.

552. What did you do with it?—I destroyed it.

553. Why?—Because I generally destroy all letters of that description.

554. "Of that description," you say?—I generally destroy all letters except they are strictly business letters.

555. Could you tell me upon what day Bidmead wrote that letter from the copy furnished to him?—I think the letter is dated the 28th April.

556. How long was that after the meeting at Mr. Wragg's?—That would be about two or three days.

557. I wish to ask you which is right about two things. Of course your memory might fail you, but I should like to point out this to you. You distinctly swore to the Committee that you had not fetched Bidmead up to Mr. Wragg's office, but that you had met him there by appointment?—Afterwards I corrected that by saying that I took him up by train.

558. Which of those two statements is true?—That I took him up by train. I forgot at first, but I recollected afterwards that I called for him and took him up by train.

559. As far as I understood your statement about the confession, you said that as to the contents of the Speaker's letter, it confessed the Haggerston petition, but that at that time Bidmead had not omitted or confessed to the other petitions:—He had not thoroughly confessed them; I do not know at the present moment whether he has thoroughly confessed to having forged all he sent in; I have not seen any document to prove that; I have seen a document proving or stating that he forged the whole of the Haggerston petition, but not of the others.

560. All those petitions were sent in to you within the space of three weeks?—As I understand; about that time.

561. Did you at the time consider it as a really possible thing that that one particular petition was forged, the Haggerston one, and that the other petitions were genuine?—Yes, I did.

562. Did you question Bidmead upon that point?—Yes; I asked him upon every petition that he brought in, whether the signatures were genuine, sheet by sheet.

563. But that is not the question. What I want to know is, after he had confessed that the Haggerston petition was not genuine, did you press him with regard to the other petitions which he had furnished you with practically at the same time?—Not very hardly.

564. Would it not have been very natural for you to press him upon that when the question arose?—I had my own opinion so strongly upon the subject that I did not press him upon it.

565. I would like to know this: you said, I think, that your first acquaintance with Bidmead was about two years ago?—From two to two-and-a-half or three years ago.

566. And that he was then in a good situation?—Yes, with very respectable people, and living with a very respectable family.

567. What called your attention to the fact that he was hard up?—I saw his brother for one thing, and another man whose name was Horne told me that if I could do anything for him he would take it as a personal favour; and then I spoke to a gentleman named Wells, and he said, "Why do not you give him a job?"

568. You saw him as a casual acquaintance; I saw him as a casual acquaintance, living in the same neighbourhood.

569. And you gave him casual employment about three months ago?—Yes.

570. Did you know him?—I had seen him about half-a-dozen times, but we had not mixed together.

571. Had

6th May 1887.]

MR. HALLITT.

[Continued.]

571. Had you employed him in the interval?—No, not in any way.

572. If it were stated that you had employed him as a steward of the Guildhall meeting, would that be true?—Yes. I beg your pardon; I had quite forgotten that.

573. Do you remember any other case?—And at the Opera House meeting, I had quite forgotten those two meetings; those are two cases of casual employment which I had quite forgotten.

574. You mention that you employed other individuals to collect signatures in the same way; would you be kind enough to give the Committee some of their names?—(After referring to a memorandum). Mr. Kennett, 7, Linscott-road, Clapton; Mr. W. Myun, 39, Heaton-road, Peckham Rye; E. Waller, 34, Ellesmere-road, Row; Mr. Aimes, 170, Union-street, Borough; but I find this man has since gone away; I have written him and the letter returned "Not known." Mr. Sharland, 21, Amelia-street, Walworth. Then there was a Mr. Samuels of 23, Devon's-road, Bow; Mr. Allen, 7A, Rowton-street, Bow; Mr. Rosewarne, whose address I do not know, but it can be furnished by Mr. Hutchings, a jeweller of High-street, Poplar, who took an interest in this movement. Mr. Porter of Kensington, whose address can be furnished by Mr. Potter of 8, Elsham-road, and Mr. Bidmead of Dalston have.

575. Alderman John O'Connor.] How many is that?—Ten.

576. Mr. Donald Crawford.] Were all those employed by you with regard to the coal and wine dues petitions?—Yes.

577. May I ask what the nature and precise footing of your own employment is with regard to these things; who employs you?—Mr. Roberts.

578. At what salary?—Three guineas a week.

579. For what period?—For as long a period as he may require me for.

580. When did this engagement commence?—Six weeks the end of last Saturday.

581. And this had reference exclusively to the coal and wine duties?—This last engagement had reference to the coal and wine duties exclusively.

582. You say you used to see the last witness in your sitting-room before you went to business; where is your place of business?—All over the place. I ought to be in Cornwall now, but I have been unfortunately stopped from going down there.

583. When you say going to business, you do not mean going to an office?—No.

584. You now say that you brought up Mr. Bidmead to Mr. Wragg's office; do I understand you to say that you were not in the room with him when he was conversing with Mr. Wragg?—Only part of the time; then he had a private audience after I was sent out of the room.

585. With whom?—With Mr. Wragg.

586. Was Mr. Roberts present at this time?—No; Mr. Roberts was out of the room as well.

587. But Mr. Roberts was there during part of the time?—Certainly.

588. Then can you inform the Committee, what I do not think we have yet learned, what Mr. Wragg's business connection with the whole affair was?—I know no more than you. I never saw Mr. Wragg before that day, nor had I seen him since until I saw him this morning.

589. Then why did you go to Mr. Wragg's office yourself?—Because I was asked to go there by my employer, Mr. Roberts.

590. I should like you to see Sir James McGarel-Hogg's petition. But before you look at that petition I should like to ask you, do you employ one collector of signatures for each district, or do you employ several?—Sometimes one and sometimes several. Sometimes a man will go out and find that he cannot get signatures in one district, and he will go to another.

591. I see; now can you inform the Committee who furnished you with the signatures to that petition I have just referred to?—I really could not.

592. Supposing it were the fact, as the last witness has stated to the Committee, that a certain number of the sheets of that petition are in his handwriting, and that a number of the other sheets are not in his handwriting, can you give any explanation of how it is that some of Bidmead's sheets are mixed with

6th May 1887.]

Mr. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

with the sheets of some one else?—I think I can explain that easily. When these men brought in the sheets, sometimes I would have three men bring in sheets, perhaps one with Shoreditch names, and some with Bow names; some with borough names in, and some all on one sheet; and another man would bring in two sheets, all for the same district; and then very often there would be seven or eight sheets brought in by three or four different men joined together, so as to make one petition, which I believe was sent in as from the East-end of London. I have never seen a petition in this shape (*exhibiting a complete petition*) until now. Mine were simply handed in in sheets; how they were gummied together and put in shape afterwards, I do not know. I have never seen them in this form.

593. Alderman John O'Connor.] You did not paste them together at all?—I did not.

594. Mr. Donald Crawford.] Then with regard to the petition coming from Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland, could you tell the Committee which of the other collectors you employed took any part of that district besides Mr. Bidmesd?—I could not tax my memory with that at all, because I daresay four or five of these gentlemen whose names I have given you might have given me sheets with 70 or 80 names, but whether in that district or not, I did not keep it long enough to know.

595. But surely you assigned the district?—No, I did not assign the districts; that is just what I did not do. If a man could tell me he could gain signatures anywhere, he would go and get them. I did not assign the districts. Perhaps a man who was trying to get signatures at Mare-street, Hackney, and found he could not get them there, if he happened to know some people at the model lodging-house at Bow, he would go over there and get them.

596. Then according to that principle a man might be called upon to sign half a dozen petitions?—Yes, he might; but I take it that a householder would not sign twice.

597. Do you know Mr. Carroll, 21, Liverpool-street?—Yes, I know Mr. Carroll; he is a commission agent; a silk agent or embroidery agent, or something of that sort, I believe. I know he has an office there.

598. Have you any dealings with him at all in connection with these petitions?—Nothing whatever.

599. Mr. Mulholland.] How many petitions had you to do with?—I could not possibly tell you; I sent them in directly I received them; Mr. Roberts could tell you.

600. Did you receive those headings to the petitions at all?—Yes.

601. How many did you receive?—I could not tell you; I gave them out to the canvassers. I should say, upon the average, for every 200 or 300 signatures, one heading to a petition.

602. How much money did you pay away to the canvassers?—To the whole lot of them about 52*l*.

603. Mr. Lowther.] For what time?—About six weeks.

604. Mr. Mulholland.] When you sent these men out did you give them a heading to the petition or simply a blank petition?—A heading always, and sometimes two or three, printed and written as well.

605. If you had 10 men you must have had 20 or 30 headings?—Yes, a great deal more than that; I kept them by me, and some printed ones as well.

606. You say that your business is in Cornwall; may I ask what your business is?—I must claim privilege upon that.

607. I do not think you can. Is it in connection with the election?—Yes.

608. Alderman John O'Connor.] You were employed at three guineas a week?—Yes.

609. And any money you paid those men you would pay beyond that?—Yes, that was simply a professional fee for myself.

610. Four shillings a hundred was what you paid to these men?—Yes; sometimes I paid 4*s*. 6*d*.

o.73.

D 3

611. That

6th May 1887.]

MR. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

611. That is not the proper way to get signatures, is it?—But you can get as many signatures as you like in London from 4 s. to 4 s. 6 d. a hundred.

612. But that is not a proper mode of getting signatures?—That is not for me to say.

613. Mr. *M^r Lagan*.] When your suspicions were aroused about the Haggerston petition, were not your suspicions aroused about the genuineness of the signatures to the other petitions?—I must confess they were.

614. Did you take no steps at all to ascertain whether they were genuine or not?—No, I did not; I returned them in, and I take it it is the place of the people to whom they were returned to take those steps.

615. According to what you say, namely, that you paid 52 l., that would be 26,000 signatures that you paid for?—But you must recollect that there would be a great many expenses in this 52 l. A man would bring in a couple of thousand signatures or so, and in addition to that I have paid 1 s. or 2 s. for tram fares. If a man were employed in Hackney, and said, "I know some people over in Bermondsey whose signatures I can get," I would say; "Well, I will not be hard upon you;" and I have paid some 4 s. 6 d. a hundred and some even 5 s.

616. You say your suspicions are that a good many of the signatures of the other petitions are not genuine also?—My own opinion is that, although at the time I did not think so.

617. From the experience that you had of these petitions now, would you be inclined to engage in the same business again in getting up petitions, without using more caution and discretion?—I certainly should not. My own opinion as to the collection of signatures to petitions is that they are a myth all through. I believe that if you were to sift the whole of the petitions that are sent to Parliament from top to bottom, you would not get more than 25 per cent. genuine signatures in any of them.

618. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Have you ever been engaged in a similar way in collecting signatures to petitions for the coal and wine duties?—No.

619. With regard to the headings, did you give any out to Mr. Bidmead without a signature at the top?—Yes, certainly.

620. Did you give any with signatures?—No, not with signatures.

621. Not with one signature?—No, not with one signature upon the heading.

622. Were they all blanks?—They were all blanks.

623. Did you keep an account of the number of petitions you gave him?—No.

624. Did you keep any account of the number of headings?—No, I did not, but the average one heading to sheets is sufficient to hold 200 signatures.

625. Upon the Haggerston petition there were over 400 signature?—Yes.

626. How was that?—As I say, I cannot answer for those signatures to those sheets after they had left my hands. If I send out headings enough for 200 signatures, and somebody who puts them together puts them up at the rate of 400 signatures to each heading, I cannot be responsible.

627. Now, as to taking the signatures, what calculation do you make as to the time necessary to get a hundred signatures?—It is a difficult thing to say. Some men will get 200 signatures a-day, and some will not get 40. I have one of my men in Walworth, for example; he gets hold of one model lodging-house-keeper, and says to him; at least I suppose he does, "I will give a glass of beer if you will come round with me and get these people to sign." And I have known that man get 250 signatures from model lodging-houses in a day. Another man, who is not cute enough for that, goes, but only knocks at the doors in the street, and will only get 40 signatures in the same time.

628. Do you think it probable or possible that a man would get 400 signatures between Saturday and Wednesday?—Yes, he would.

629. For the purpose of getting the thing done quickly, there would be no reason why he should not collect that number of genuine signatures between Saturday and Wednesday?—He could do it, I should think, easily. One reason for it is this: you see, so many of these men who have taken up this work have been men in poor circumstances, and distressed; they have taken the 4 s. 6 d. from

6th May 1887.]

Mr. HALLITT.

[Continued.]

from me, and I believe those men get other men to work with them or for them; they very likely farm the matter out, and let some one else do it for 6d. a hundred less. That is the only way, I believe, that you can send in a number.

630. Mr. *Tedemachs*.] You say that Bidmead confessed to you that the Haggerston petition was an entire forgery?—No; he said that 200 of the signatures were forgeries.

631. Then, with regard to the other petitions, when did he make any statement as to their genuineness?—He has not made any statement to me as to their genuineness. The only statement I have seen made by him was in connection with the Haggerston petition.

632. In writing, yes; but when he was at Mr. Wrugg's office with you, do you mean to say that nothing was said about the other petitions?—Not in front of me.

633. When you made this statement you were not aware that the other petitions were forgeries?—Certainly not. I am not aware of it now, although I have my own opinion about it. I suspect it strongly.

634. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Then if Mr. Bidmead were to say he distinctly confessed the forgery of the other petitions to you before going to Mr. Wrugg's, that statement would not be true?—Not as far as I know.

635. But it might be true?—I should say not; it is a mere matter of one statement against the other.

636. Mr. *Laurther*.] Your memory has deceived you once or twice to-day; you will excuse my saying so. Will you undertake to say that you never gave a heading to a petition which had the first signature upon it?—Not to my recollection.

637. Are you quite sure of that?—Not to my recollection.

638. You always gave them to Bidmead without a name upon them?—If I gave one to Bidmead with a signature to it, I certainly did more for him than I did to any other man.

639. You had a good many headings to petitions to dispose of; you sent out 30 or 40?—Quite so.

640. Did those 40 all come back again?—Yes, some of them have come back again unsigned.

641. Do you keep all those that come back to you, whether signed or unsigned?—All those that I have given out I have no doubt have been brought back again signed or unsigned; those that were signed would pass through in the ordinary manner; those that would be unsigned I have at home now.

642. Therefore it would be quite possible that they would have been served in the same way as the Haggerston petition?—Not that I know of.

643. But those that have come through you?—But there are thousands of petitions which come to the House besides those that came through me.

644. You say you have sent out 40 headings; did those all come back to you?—Yes, signed or unsigned; those signed I have sent in to Mr. Roberts, and those unsigned I have kept.

645. I forget whether you said you altered; did you alter the form of Bidmead's letter in any way?—No.

646. If Bidmead had said that he wrote a letter, and that it was shown to you and to others at Mr. Wrugg's office, and that you had made alterations in it, that would not be true?—That I had made alterations in any letter written by Mr. Bidmead?

647. The one to the Speaker?—This letter is a *fac-simile* of the copy.

648. You did not keep the draft?—I did keep the draft.

649. Then what did you do with it?—I do not know.

650. Do you keep all letters?—Yes.

651. Where it is advisable?—Yes.

652. In case of such a letter as this, you would probably consider that it was not advisable?—(No answer).

The Witnesses withdrew.

Monday, 9th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT :

Sir Charles Forster.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.
Mr. William Lowther.

Mr. M'Lagan.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Henry Tollemache.
Mr. Wiggin.

SIR CHARLES FORSTER, IN THE CHAIR.

Mr. ALFRED TAYLOR, called again; sworn, and Examined.

653. *Chairman.*] I BELIEVE you produce some further petitions?—Yes; I produce some petitions in favour of the Bill, the remainder of those that are suspected to contain signatures in the same handwriting.

654. How many petitions in all do you produce?—The petitions are as follows: one from Greenwich, Woolwich, and Deptford, presented by Mr. Board on the 19th of April last; one from the ratepayers and inhabitants of Southwark, presented upon the 6th of April; the Member presenting it did not sign his name to it.

655. *Mr. Lowther.*] Is the prayer of the petition the same as those that we have examined?—The prayer is the same, but the headings may vary.

656. *Chairman.*] But the prayer is the same in every case?—Yes, I believe they all emanate from one source. There is one petition from the ratepayers of Shoreditch and Finsbury, presented by Mr. Bigwood upon the 22nd of March. There is a petition from the ratepayers of Notting Hill, Stepney, and Limehouse, presented by Sir Roper Lethbridge upon the 24th of March; there is one from the ratepayers of Bromley-by-Bow, Poplar, and district, presented by Mr. Wootton Isaacson upon the 21st of April; there is one from the inhabitants of St. Pancras, presented by Mr. R. G. Webster upon the 22nd of April; one from the ratepayers of East London, presented by Sir James M'Garel-Hogg on the 25th of April; one from the ratepayers of the City of London and district, presented by Sir Robert Fowler on the 26th of April; one from the ratepayers of South-east London, presented by Mr. Baggallay upon the 22nd of April; one from the ratepayers of Dalston and Stoke Newington, presented by Sir James M'Garel-Hogg upon the 25th of April; one from the ratepayers of Ilford, Manor Park; and East Ham, presented by Mr. Theobald upon the 18th of April; one from the ratepayers of Brixton and Peckham, presented by Mr. Baggallay upon the 20th of April; one from the ratepayers of West Ham, Leyton, and Leytonstone, presented by Mr. Forrest Fulton upon the 31st of March; one from the ratepayers of Dulwich and Peckham, presented by Mr. Morgan Howard, upon the 20th of April; one from the ratepayers and inhabitants of the parish of Bromley, St. Leonard, presented by Captain Colomh on the 23rd of March; one from the ratepayers and inhabitants of South-east London, presented by Mr. Baggallay on the 4th of April; one from the ratepayers of Clerkenwell, presented by Captain Penton upon the 14th of April; and one from the ratepayers of Deptford and Greenwich, presented by Colonel Hughes upon the 18th of April. The petition I next produce contains the names of the race-horses. There are a very large number of signatures which I believe are not genuine in this petition. I think it probable that the person who has written his name lengthwise of the petition was the canvasser who collected the signatures. This petition is from
the

9th May 1887.]

MR. TAYLOR.

[Continued.]

the ratepapers of Greenwich and Camberwell. (*The Witness produced the above petitions in the order of statement.*)

657. *Chairman.*] What is the first name on the petition?—Edwin J. Stevens, architect and surveyor, 33, Alford-road, Camberwell.

658. By how many does this petition purport to be signed?—By 1,406.

659. Have you examined the petitions?—I have examined the petitions; I find a very large number of the signatures which I believe to be forgeries.

660. *Mr. Dalrymple.*] What is the date of that petition?—It was presented by Colonel Hughes on the 1st of April.

661. *Chairman.*] How many race-horses' names are there upon that petition?—I think there are 13; but they are upon the last sheet of the petition.

662. I understand you to say on examining the petition you find a great number of the signatures appear to be forgeries?—Yes.

663. Do there appear to be many genuine signatures?—I think it is a very bad petition altogether.

664. How many genuine signatures should you say there were?—I could not tell that.

665. What is the next petition you produce?—The next petition is from North-west Ham, presented upon the 12th of April by Mr. Forrest Fulton. I find amongst the signatures the names of Mr. "Balfour," "M. Hicks-Beach," and "Joseph Biggar."

666. *Mr. Tollemache.*] This is not the race-horse petition?—No, this is another one. It also contains the name "W. H. Smith." The address of "M. Hicks-Beach," is "2," or "24," Phoenix Park; the address of "W. H. Smith," is "2, Strand." After the name of "Joseph Biggar," I find "Pork Merchant" written. The address of Mr Balfour is given as 32, Mare-street, Hackney.

667. *Mr. Lowther.*] There is a great smear upon that petition; do you think that is intentional?—I think it is very probable; it is the same sort of ink as the signatures are written with. I find a lot of the signatures in this petition, witnessed by a man of the name of Hone. Someone has written the name, and then there is a cross, and that cross has been witnessed by Hone in each case.

668. *Mr. Tollemache.*] Which petition is that?—This is the North-west Ham petition; the number in the Report of it is 4,729. Those are all the petitions I produce in favour of the Bill.

669. How many are there?—Twenty.

670. Are those in addition to the petitions you presented the other day?—Yes, they are in addition to the petitions I presented the other day.

671. *Chairman.*] Adding those 20 petitions to those you presented on Friday, how many does that make altogether?—Twenty-nine, I think.

672. Have you examined the petitions upon the other side?—They were examined in the ordinary course and passed. With the exception of that from Bumphope Colliery, Holmside, which the Committee have already reported to the House that many of the signatures are in the same handwriting; I do not feel that I should be warranted in drawing the attention of the Committee to those petitions as containing fictitious or fraudulent signatures to any great extent; but as they have been examined by an expert, and no doubt some irregularities may exist in them, I have brought them with me in case the Committee should require them.

673. Would this be a proper summary of your answer: that with regard to the petitions from the other side there is nothing to draw the attention of the Committee to?—No, there is not; speaking generally, I should say they are very fair petitions.

674. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] How many of them are there?—There are a good many of them, but I have only produced those that have been examined by an expert.

675. *Chairman.*] You say those petitions in favour of a continuation of the coal and wine dues are all more or less suspicious?—Yes.

o-73.

E

676. Mr.

9th May 1887.]

MR. TAYLOR.

[Continued.]

676. Mr. *McLagan*.] Do you mean that all the signatures are more or less suspicious, or only some of the signatures?—A very large number in each petition.

677. *Chairman*.] Then with regard to the other petitions there is nothing to attract your attention, and as far as you can see you believe them to be genuine?—I believe a very large majority of the signatures to be genuine.

678. Mr. *Tellemacke*.] You say an expert has seen these petitions against the continuance; has he had an opportunity of looking at all the petitions against the continuance?—If he chose.

679. And he has selected a certain number which you understand he thinks are open to observation?—Yes.

680. But he has seen other petitions besides this batch?—He is now examining some more, but he has only had time to examine those.

681. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] As regards those 20 petitions which you have referred to, have those been examined by an expert?—No.

682. And it is your own observation that those signatures are not genuine?—It is.

The public were now, by order of the Committee, admitted.

MR. FREDERICK WILLIAM LEE, called in; sworn, and Examined.

683. Colonel *Bridgman*.] Will you look at this signature and see if it is your's (*handing the Haggerston petition to the Witness*)?—No, that is not mine.

684. Mr. *Louthen*.] Do you live at this address?—Yes.

685. Where do you live?—20, Urswick-road, Lower Clapton.

686. Mr. *Mulholland*.] Did Bidmead give you the petition to sign?—No.

687. You did not take it home and sign it?—No, I did not.

688. *Chairman*.] Do you know Bidmead?—Yes.

689. Had you any communication with him with respect to that petition?—I heard that he was obtaining signatures with respect to the coal and wine dues, that is all.

690. You heard that from him?—Yes. My name is not "William Lee" at all; it is "Frederick William Lee."

691. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] Were you aware that Bidmead was collecting signatures by going round?—Yes.

692. Mr. *Mulholland*.] Did he ask you to sign it?—No.

693. And you did not sign any petition?—No.

694. Colonel *Bridgman*.] Bidmead was asked this question: "You swear that William Lee, of 20, Urswick-road, wrote that signature;" to which he replied: "I gave it him to write; he did not write his name then, but he said, 'Very well, I will take it.' There is no truth in that?—No.

695. Mr. *Louthen*.] Did you ever see this petition?—No.

696. Or any petition like it?—No.

697. Colonel *Bridgman*.] Then Bidmead also stated that you said, "Very well, I will sign it for you, so he took it home." There is no truth in that?—No.

698. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] Did he tell you that he was employed to collect signatures?—I heard that he was employed by someone; by Mr. Hallett, I believe.

699. Did you hear that from himself?—From himself.

9th May 1887.

MR. CARLTON ROBERTS, sworn; and Examined.

700. *Chairman.*] WHERE do you live?—Brooklands, Wanstead.

701. What is your business address?—My business address is 6, Town Hall Buildings, Mare-street, Hackney.

702. What are you?—In this matter I think I am properly described as a political agent; I am in a business as a printer.

703. Are you a solicitor?—No, I am not.

704. You are a printer and political agent?—I am a printer and political agent.

705. Were you employed to get up petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties?—I was.

706. By whom?—I would beg very respectfully, if you will permit me, to decline to state, not that there is the slightest difficulty in saying by whom; but at the same time I may say that I have personally paid for every petition bearing a number of signatures that has been presented, and, therefore, I should be glad to take every responsibility in the matter. The gentleman who employed me is quite ready to come before the Committee; there is no objection to give his name. But having paid everything I should be glad if I could be allowed to keep back the name of the man who is suffering in this matter owing probably to my negligence.

707. The Committee request me to say that they must press you for the name?—Mr. Robert T. Wragg, of 11, Great Saint Helen's, E.C.

708. I understand you to say that you were employed by Mr. Wragg to get up petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues?—Yes.

709. Did you employ other persons under you?—I did.

710. Who were they?—J. W. Hallett, of 3, Chatham-place, Hackney; C. Board, 18, Gabriel-street, Honor Oak Park; T. Carrell, 21, Liverpool-street, E.C. I may remark about those three that there was a different arrangement with regard to them from that made with the other names I shall subsequently give you. J. Page, 50, Sewardstone-road, E.; W. H. DeHorne, 15, Clerkenwell Green, E.C.; C. H. Ball, 31, Maitland Park-road, N.W.; W. Bull, 10, Goodwin-street, Fonthill-road, N.; W. Stewart, 9, Manor Park-place, Manor Park; C. H. Palmer, 3, Mayville-street, Stoke Newington; J. T. Remington, Sebert-road, Forest Gate; G. Vidler, 54, Avenue-road, Forest Gate; and R. Willingsale, 11, Cross-street, Islington. I may say with regard to Vidler, Remington, and Bull, that those petitions upon which they were engaged were amongst the first petitions; three small petitions, special petitions, that were sent in. I do not think they are amongst those that are questioned; at all events, they went in weeks ago.

711. What other names have you?—I have no others; with regard to Willingsale, I did not actually employ him; Mr. Barnes employed him, but Mr. Barnes did not receive any consideration for employing him; so he was actually the man who was paid and who got the signatures.

712. You did not employ Bidmead?—I did not employ Bidmead; I employed Hallett, whose name I gave you first.

713. You did not employ Bidmead, you say?—I did not; I have never paid anybody who actually collected a signature, as far as I know. If it would be any use to the Committee, I may say that I have had a great deal of experience in these matters; and when Mr. Wragg, as a political agent, wrote to me saying that he required signatures to petitions, I simply wrote to different political agents whom I knew in different parts of London and gave instructions which I shall be glad to rehearse; and I was the channel through whom the signatures came.

714. You told me that you paid for all the signatures yourself?—Yes, I did, every farthing. I have not received a penny yet.

715. Have you received no remuneration yourself?—None.

716. Do I understand you to say that all the outlay has been paid by you?—Every farthing of it at present.

0.73.

E 2

717. Mr.

9th May 1857.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

717. *Mr. Mulholland.*] Do you expect to receive anything?—Certainly; have paid everything at present. The reason of that is very easily explained. I have done business with Mr. Wragg for years, and if it had not been for the unfortunate occurrence of these petitions, I daresay the matter would all have been settled by this time; at the time it occurred I was just making up my account to send it in.

718. *Chairman.*] Then you have a bill against Mr. Wragg?—I have.

719. What communication did you have with Bidmead in this matter?—Immediately Mr. Wragg informed me that the signatures to the petition presented by Lord Claud Hamilton were questioned, I said I did not believe it possible, but I would make inquiry. I went back and it happened from particular circumstances to remember this Haggerston petition as having come from Mr. Hallett. I immediately wrote to Mr. Hallett to the following effect. "Dear Sir,—I find that the petition from Haggerston, which I believe came through you, is questioned in the House of Commons. I shall be glad if you will see your canvassers, and tell me if there is any ground for such question." Upon that Mr. Hallett brought me a letter written by Bidmead. I have not a copy of the letter here, but I think the Committee have it, in which Bidmead stated that these signatures were correct and genuine signatures. I immediately took that letter to Mr. Wragg, and said, "It is just what I told you, here is the statement of the canvasser, who collected the signatures." Mr. Wragg said, "I will inspect the petition at the office, and I will give you four or five signatures off the petition, and if you make inquiries as to them you will be able to test whether the signatures are right or not. I then wrote to Mr. Hallett, because I thought it was a matter having to do with him. He came to me and I furnished him with the four names from the petition, and I said, "Just go and see if those people signed, and if they did not, it is a clear case against Bidmead." Mr. Hallett made inquiry, and informed me, having called at those places, that each of those gentlemen repudiated having made the signatures, although they were in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; he taxed Bidmead with the forgery of the signatures, and Bidmead admitted it.

720. *Mr. Tellemache.*] What was the date of that?—I do not know the date of it except as far as it may be put in those declarations. I then said to Mr. Hallett, "This is a very serious matter for me." Mr. Hallett, I ought to say, knew nothing of Mr. Wragg; nobody that I employed knew anything of Mr. Wragg except myself. I said to Mr. Hallett, "This is a very serious matter; I must take Bidmead into the City and have his statement taken down so that there may be no getting behind it at any future time." He said, "I think I can get Bidmead for you at any time you like to mention." I said, "If you wait at home until I telegraph for you you can then bring Bidmead down and he can make his statement in a proper way. If he is going to confess, let us get his statement in a proper way." Of course I felt the difficulty of my position, if Bidmead, having first confessed, should afterwards deny having confessed it. I went to Mr. Wragg's office and said I had no doubt that the petition was a concocted petition. He said "It is a very serious matter; we ought to have these men, Hallett and Bidmead, here." I said, "I have provided for that contingency; if you desire it I will telegraph at once to Mr. Hallett to tell him to bring Bidmead on here." Mr. Wragg said, "I do desire it." I then telegraphed to Mr. Hallett, and waited at Mr. Wragg's office until Bidmead arrived. I do not think there is anything else to say about that.

721. *Chairman.*] What passed at the office; whom did Bidmead come with?—Bidmead came with Mr. Hallett; they were announced in the usual way by the clerk in the outer office, "Mr. Bidmead and Mr. Hallett have arrived," and they were shown in. In the meantime while I had been waiting at Mr. Wragg's office, I made out a statement which I subsequently forwarded myself to Lord Claud Hamilton, of which doubtless the Committee have a copy. Mr. Hallett and Bidmead then came in, and Mr. Wragg took down Mr. Hallett's statement, I think it was, first, and Mr. Bidmead's subsequently.

722. *Mr.*

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

722. Mr. Lowther.] When you say, "took his statement down," was it a verbal statement or was it a written statement?—Mr. Wragg wrote it down in writing while Mr. Hallett dictated it, as I may be dictating now.

723. Chairman.] How long did this interview last, do you suppose?—I dare say I was there that morning two hours or two hours and a-half, because I had to wait for Bridghead and Mr. Hallett a little, and immediately after they came they made their depositions; I think I stayed a little while afterwards and mutually bewailed with Mr. Wragg the facts of the case. I asked him to get these three statements copied, because I expressed my determination to write to Lord Claud Hamilton at once about it. I knew nothing of this Committee of Inquiry at the time, at least, I do not think I did; but I was most anxious to clear myself with Lord Claud Hamilton at the time, so I asked Mr. Wragg to get the statements copied, which he did, and I wrote a private letter to Lord Claud Hamilton stating that I was overwhelmed with sorrow and shame, and that I had been the means of placing his Lordship in the position I had.

724. Mr. Lowther.] When you asked Mr. Hallett to get the petitions signed, did you give him any instructions about how they were to be signed?—I gave him a number of ruled sheets upon which to get the signatures, and the same remark applies to every man that I instructed; I did not give them engrossed headings, but I gave them what I venture to think is better, namely, a number of printed headings, of which I beg to hand in copies (*handing in the same*); they are printed headings which are much more easily read. It would have been a very expensive thing to provide engrossed headings to every sheet, and moreover, the people could not read them so easily. There are two styles of petitions, one for the outer district where there was to be a rebate, and one, a London petition, where no rebate was required. I most emphatically instructed my sub-agents that there was to be nothing in the shape of signatures that could be questioned, and I remember a discussion on one occasion when there was some question of the amount of money to be spent in obtaining the signatures. I said to Mr. Hallett, "There is to be no question as to the amount of money being spent, and as to the signatures: being *bona fide* or proper signatures;" that is to say, if the amount was to be 10*s.* if the signatures were to be proper *bona fide* signatures, and if for 4*s.* he could only get forged signatures, I should have repudiated the idea of the 4*s.* and paid 10*s.* with pleasure.

725. Did you see the signatures?—Yes, every one of the petitions passed through my hands.

726. Did you look at this Haggerston petition?—Yes, I believe I looked at the Haggerston petition, the top sheet, and knowing Clarke, the landlord of the "Brownlow Arms," whose signature is the first upon that petition, I thought it was right. Mr. Hallett had received his sheets from Bidmead day by day, and kept them till he had got what he thought was sufficient to send in in one petition to Parliament. He brought me Clarke's engrossed petition, and he said that that was quite ready to send off. I may have opened the top sheet and seen Clarke's name, I do not know whether I did; but if I had I should have remarked to myself, "Oh, that is all right, because I know Clarke is in favour of the continuance of the dues." That has just enabled me to fix the Haggerston petition, otherwise I should not have been able to fix it, but it was that very fact. Lord Claud Hamilton was away in Spain, and the petition was kept over some weeks, and it came into my hands in that way. Mr. Hallett said, "There is a complete petition for presentation, it is all Haggerston signatures," and that just enabled me to fix the petition when I heard it had been questioned in the House of Commons.

727. You have no note of your interview with Mr. Wragg, have you?—No, I daresay I saw him every day, twice and thrice a day sometimes; generally when I went to the City to dine or lunch, I would call in, and discuss any matter that might arise, and then I would take down five or six of the petitions under my arm, and go into his office.

728. But you would not keep any memorandum of the interview with Mr. Wragg which lasted an hour and a half or a couple of hours?—No, I should not;

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

not; it did not actually last an hour and a half, because I was part of the time waiting for Mr. Hallett to come; I waited in Mr. Wragg's private office I do not know that I waited there all the while, but the actual interview, taking down the statements and conversation it did not take up perhaps half an hour; but Mr. Wragg was very anxious about the petition, and as to whether we could prove it to be valid or not, and we went thoroughly into the matter both for and against.

729. How many of these petitions do you think you have had in your hands?—I did not keep an account, because I knew the Report of the House of Commons would keep an account; but a large number.

730. All the petitions that you had to do with have been in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties?—Yes.

731. You have not had any petitions upon the other side?—No, certainly not.

732. Mr. Tollemache.] Where were the sheets pinned together; were they joined together in your office?—No.

733. Or before they came to you?—They were joined together in Mr. Wragg's office; they would be sorted first. It did not follow because a man lived at Clerkenwell that he would bring in Clerkenwell sheets; it is just as possible that although he lived at Clerkenwell, he might have been collecting signatures in the West-end or in the south of London; so that instead of making separate petitions for every canvasser, we would collect the south London signatures together, and the east London signatures together.

734. Mr. Hallett speaks of a letter which Bidmead wrote to him, and which he handed to you, and which he wished to be produced; where is that letter?—I handed it to Mr. Wragg, and Mr. Wragg has a copy of it in his letter-book.

735. Do you know if any other gentlemen were employed under Mr. Wragg to get up petitions?—No, there were not any. I had the sole employment of the people.

736. Do you know how much you paid away for the getting up of the petitions?—About 376 l.

737. That would be an average of 5 s. a hundred?—Yes, something like that; I have not worked it out. It is nearly 9 s. per 100.

738. Bidmead admitted subsequently that the Haggerston petition was from beginning to end a forgery, did he not?—No, not from beginning to end; he only admitted in Mr. Wragg's office that he had forged 200 names.

739. Was he taxed with the other petitions, and did he admit anything with respect to them?—No, he was not taxed with any of the other petitions. In fact I made this remark to Mr. Hallett; I said, "Now has Mr. Bidmead supplied us with any more signatures; has he done any more like these," and he said, "No, really it is confined to the Haggerston petition." The reason I recollect that is that on a subsequent occasion when Mr. Hallett came to me, he said, "I find Bidmead was paid for some 1,600 or 1,700 signatures."

740. Could you give the Committee the date of that conversation?—I should think it would be two days after the meeting in Mr. Wragg's office.

741. What was the date of the meeting in Mr. Wragg's office?—Mr. Wragg will be able to give you that.

742. Mr. Hallett said it was the 25th or 26th of April?—Whatever he said I have no doubt is correct.

743. I understand that you are responsible for that letter to the Speaker?—I am.

744. When did you write that?—Upon the very morning I was waiting for Mr. Hallett I drew it up.

745. But when; what was the date of the letter?—I do not recollect, it might have been upon the same date while I was waiting at Mr. Wragg's, or it might have been the next day or the following day.

746. Were you aware when you drew up that letter to the Speaker that there were certain allegations about other petitions?—No, not at all; I sat down and wrote that letter myself and gave it to my clerk to copy, and I can call my clerk to prove it if it is required. My anxiety in getting that letter written to the

9th May 1887.]

MR. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

the Speaker was this, I had fortunately been able to nail Bidmead in the matter; I had done that already in a solicitor's office; I thought "Now there is no trust to be placed in Bidmead"; I want to get something from Bidmead spontaneously, if I can"; so I wrote down what I thought would be the most appropriate form to put it in; I wrote my own feeling in the matter; but I sent a letter to Mr. Hallett in the meantime to this effect: "Dear Sir, I think it will be best for all of us, especially for Bidmead himself, if he will write a memorandum to the Speaker somewhat similar to what I enclose; if he will write it out and sign it, I will see that it is posted."

747. That letter was drawn up, was it not, after you were aware that he had been paid for the 1,600 or 1,700 signatures?—No, I do not think so.

748. But if it was after the interview with Mr. Wragg, that would have been so?—No, it could not have been then; that letter was drawn up solely with regard to that Haggerston petition. The reason that animated me with regard to getting that letter drawn up was simply this: There is this petition gone wrong, if the Speaker of the House of Commons gets a memorial from the man who has manufactured the petition, who has done the wrong, I think that will probably obviate the necessity of inquiry by the House; but I had not the slightest idea at the time I penned that memorandum to the Speaker that there was any other petition in question.

749. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] To whom did you give your memorandum of the letter to the Speaker?—I gave it, I think, to a lad in my office of the name of Barrett; I said, "Copy that, Barrett, and put at the head of it 'To the Right Honourable the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir.'" Then I took a memorandum from my stationery case and directed it to Mr. Hallett, and wrote my note upon it, and sent one of the lads to take it to Mr. Hallett.

750. Do you suggest any possible reason for Bidmead saying that that letter to the Speaker was entirely his own, that no conversation passed between you and him about that letter to the Speaker?—Certainly not; never. If the Committee will allow me to say so, I never brought any pressure in any way to bear upon Bidmead in this matter; all the pressure I brought to bear in regard to that letter being written was to say to Mr. Hallett in writing, "Dear Mr. Hallett, I think it would be better for all of us, and especially for Bidmead himself, if he will write a memorandum to the Speaker somewhat similar to what I enclose." I might tell the Committee that Bidmead having done all that he possibly can to help me in this unfortunate difficulty, I do not want to express how strongly I feel upon Bidmead's conduct.

751. But it is a suspicious circumstance, when Bidmead has expressed his desire to make a clean breast of it, that he should say: "The letter is all my own composition;" and again when he is asked "Was the wording of the letter all your own?" he says, "yes." It is a curious thing that he should have made up his mind to make a clean breast of it, and then to tell us a perfectly unnecessary falsehood?—If the Committee without asking me that question will compare the statements he made, about Lee having signed the petition, with the statement which I understand Mr. Lee has made in this chair this morning, I think that will be the best answer to your question.

752. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] I do not understand that answer?—Mr. Bidmead, when he was before you, told you that Mr. Lee signed a certain petition, and you have had Mr. Lee before you this morning, and have been able to ascertain whether he told the truth or not.

753. But I do not understand that the honourable Member doubted the truth of your statement that you wrote the letter to the Speaker, but he asked you: could you give any explanation why Bidmead told that falsehood?—I could not. I certainly looked upon the letter to the Speaker as being another link which would be favourable to me, should I come before a Committee, to show that so far from impeding the action of the House, I had been only too anxious from the first to have the matter thoroughly sifted.

754. *Chairman*.] As a matter of fact, the letter to the Speaker was your letter?—It was my letter.

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

755. Bidmead only signed it?—I have not compared the two, but practically it was my composition, though it was in his handwriting.

756. Do you know his writing?—I cannot say that I do (*the letter having been handed to the Witness*); I do not know his writing, but I know where he is living.

757. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] You will observe that it is a suspicious circumstance that Bidmead swore to this particular falsehood with no apparent object, unless it was to shelter someone; can you suspect anybody that he would wish to shelter?—I cannot. I told him very distinctly that I thought it was a very serious matter. I thought it was a very possible thing, if Bidmead had done what he told me, that he, or even we both, should be committed to the Clock Tower or to prison for a breach of the privileges of the House; and I said, "The only way in which you can in any way mitigate the punishment with which you may be visited will be to make a clean breast of it;" and I may have added, I dare say, "I think you owe it to me to vindicate my part of the matter"; nothing beyond that.

758. What were the particular circumstances (you mentioned some) which made you recollect specially the Haggerston petition?—Its being brought to me as a complete petition and ready to go; "Here is a petition with 440 signatures ready to go;" and directly I heard that the petition questioned was a petition with that number of signatures upon it, I thought at once "This must be the Haggerston petition which I had from Mr. Hallett."

759. Mr. *Mulholland*.] Did you give the agents you employed 200 or 300 copies of this heading?—Yes; I think 2,000 or 3,000 copies have been printed, of course it would depend upon the number of signatures which each brought in; some would have more and some less, but I think here there were 300 copies of that were given to each of my agents.

760. Do they bring back the petitions lithographed to you, as they stand now?—Yes, they would.

761. Each would bring back one heading to you?—Yes.

762. Signed?—Yes; we had an arrangement that, say, 200 names would make a petition. If the agent at Greenwich was to bring me in 2,000 signatures at the end of the week, I should want 10 headings for it; he would bring me 10 headings and we should distribute the signatures to the separate petitions.

763. Did you tell the men off to separate districts?—No; I knew where they were from past political work; I know where to find them if I want them.

764. You mentioned the name of three agents, Bull, Remington, and Vidler, who you said had sent in small petitions which were not questioned; how did you know that those petitions were not questioned?—They went in so long ago that I think I should have seen it in the Report if they had been.

765. Did you mean to imply that all the other petitions have been questioned?—I meant to say with regard to these petitions that it was only fair to say that they were got up as special petitions at the commencement of the agitation; and that as they had not been questioned up to the present time, I might take it that there had been no question about them; moreover, those three men did not receive any sum per 100, as the three top ones on my list who received so much per 100; I said to them, "I want a special petition from your district; how much can you get me up a really good influential petition from your neighbourhood for?" In one case it was 10 l., in another 6 l., in another 10 l., and perhaps there would be only 500 signatures upon those petitions; in fact there were not so many.

766. How much did you pay them?—The first three I paid so much per 100 and a salary. To Stewart and De Horn I paid so much per 100 and an honorarium; Bull has actually only received his out-of-pocket expenses; what he has actually paid the canvassers.

767. Why did you make that distinction between them?—The different men would do it in different ways; some men did not want paying for what they did.

768. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] How much did you pay per 100 to the first three?—I never in any way interfered with the sums paid by either of those gentlemen;

9th May 1887.]

MR. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

gentlemen; I never laid down the rule to pay anything specially; I left it to them entirely what they paid; but I invariably had this kind of conversation, "We want these signatures; what can you get them for; what will they cost." In Mr. Hallett's case he had to make a trial before he could tell me, and after he had been at it a day or two he said, "I could name a rate of about 4 s. a hundred." Mr. Carrell said it was impossible to get *bona fide* signatures under 8 s. a hundred, and Mr. Board said the same; Mr. De Horn said 10 s. per 100; those sums per hundred I did not in any way control; I never questioned them except that I said, "Now look here, do not let us have any mistake about it; we must have proper signatures; do not let us have any talk afterwards that you did not get them properly or did not get enough money. The 8 s. or the 4 s. was to cover the expenses they would pay; the reason for giving that order was that if a man was to go and get a number of signatures without knowing what he was to be paid for them, he might come back and say, "Now I want 40 s. per 100 for them; so this arrangement per 100 was more with the desire to avoid an afterclap and overcharge than with any view to fixing the precise price of the signatures.

769. What salary did the first three gentlemen get?—Three guineas, three guineas, and three pounds; Board got 3 l.

770. And it was entirely in connection with the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues that they were employed?—Yes.

771. How much did you pay Mr. Hallett?—£. 52. 8 s. 6 d.

772. And Board, how much?—I have paid him 105 l., about.

773. And Carrell?—From 105 l. to 106 l.

774. And Page?—£. 7. 11 s.

775. And De Horn?—£. 5.

776. How did their pay come to be so very much less than the others?—Some of them were not nearly so active as the others. I gave them *carte blanche* to bring me as many *bona fide* signatures as they could, and I was prepared to pay them at a certain rate. Those who were very active, of course, brought in a great many, and those who were not so active did not bring in so many; that is the only explanation I can give.

777. You have not yet received any remuneration for your own services?—Nothing; I have not even received the money that I have paid.

778. What was your personal remuneration; for, of course, you have great experience in these matters?—I do not know that I am in a position to say exactly what it will be; I have made no bargain in the matter; I shall be quite content to leave my remuneration open. I am afraid this Committee of Inquiry will very greatly militate against it, though.

779. We do not want to enter into that; you have had previous experience of the kind?—Yes, I have been eight or nine times election agent under the Corrupt Practices Act, so I have had a great deal of experience in election work.

780. This had gone on for six weeks?—Yes.

781. Comparing your practice on former occasions, what would your remuneration be?—It depends a good deal upon who the paymaster is to be.

782. You had a very good paymaster?—Yes; if this unfortunate thing had not occurred, I have no doubt I should have come out of it very well.

783. I think I should like to know what, from your former experience, you would expect to be paid?—I do not know that I have had any experience similar to the present, being confined almost exclusively to the matter of the petitions. Being in business as I am, I am not like an ordinary political agent; I do not give up my business altogether, although, of course, it suffers while I am engaged on business like this. I could hardly say, "I must charge five guineas a day, or three guineas a day, or two guineas a day." It would be a matter upon which I should have to say to Mr. Wragg, "I have done as well as I could for you, and I think I have done remarkably well, and I want you to do as well as you can for me."

784. You take, I think, the entire responsibility of this matter?—Yes.

785. When Bidmead had confessed that he had forged a large number of signatures,

o.73.

P

26th May 1887.]

MR. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

signatures, do not you think, considering you were responsible for the genuineness of the petition, that it was of very great importance for you to ascertain how far he had been engaged in other petitions; did not you inquire minutely into that?—I think events marched very rapidly; but, as far as I was concerned, I remember a remark I made upon that to Hallett, as to whether he (Bidmead) had had anything else to do with the petitions, which almost covers your question. I think directly I found in the newspapers (I do not know whether it was not upon Sir Charles Forster's statement in the House of Commons) that other petitions had been questioned, I said to Mr. Hallett, "Well, has Bidmead had anything to do with these?" And he said, "I find that he has been paid for 1,600 signatures;" and I may then have made the remark, "You may depend upon it that a lot of them are wrong," or something to that effect.

786. Had your letter to the Speaker, which Bidmead signed, gone off by that time?—Certainly, I should say so; I cannot give the Committee any other answer than I gave them before, to state with all seriousness what I have stated before, that to the best of my belief and knowledge that letter was written to the Speaker entirely and solely upon the Haggerston petition, and does not relate to any other petition.

787. It does not relate to any other petition; but when you were suggesting to Bidmead to communicate his statement to the Speaker, would it not have been of importance to bring under the notice of the Speaker the fact that there were other fictitious petitions?—No, I did not know of them; the Committee will remember that I was dealing with Bidmead through another person, and I trusted that person in every possible way. I never had anything to do with Bidmead except upon the first occasion when he came to Mr. Wragg's office, when he said most positively in Mr. Wragg's office that only 200 of those signatures were forged. Then the question was put to him, "Did not you do the whole of them, Bidmead; now come," and he said, "No, I did not do more than 200." When I first heard of his having done, or been paid for 1,600 signatures, I presumed that somebody else had done the rest of the 1,600 signatures, and that he had been engaged in connecting the 200.

788. And you did not think that your responsibility required you to make a more complete investigation when you found that this extensive forgery had been going on?—I felt my responsibility very strongly; I did not lose a moment; I cannot fix the exact date that you are inquiring about, but I did most seriously insist, with Mr. Hallett, and impress it upon Bidmead himself, when I saw him, that there should not be the slightest prevarication or keeping back of one single thing; and I believe, if Bidmead had told the truth in Mr. Wragg's office, I should have been sooner alive to the fact that certain other forged signatures had been sent in.

789. And then I asked you this: whether your responsibility induced you to make any inquiry, and you said not?—Certainly it did.

790. What did that inquiry result in?—It resulted in this, that I found Bidmead had been paid for some 1,600 signatures.

791. And that was all you discovered with regard to the Haggerston petition?—Yes.

792. Or to any of these coal and wine petitions?—It was hardly that, but I was confining myself to Bidmead. Immediately I found that there was some question, I wrote to everyone of the sub-agents, and I said, "It will not be sufficient for me to go before the Committee to say that I have employed you. I must have a list from you of everybody that you have employed;" and I have the list here (*producing the same*) of everybody who has been paid upon this matter. I caused a form to be printed of which I sent a specimen round to each sub-agent, asking him to get each canvasser to sign the declaration, and in order that I might get a complete set of declarations to present to the Committee. I did not get a complete set of the declarations, but these are all that I have been able to get in the time, and letters have been written to the agents urging them to give me the fullest possible information to place before the Committee.

793. This (*exhibiting a circular*) is the report of an agent of the name of Bentley, and we have now got in his case to the same stage as we had with Bidmead,

25th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

Bidmead, when he wrote his first letter and said all the signatures were genuine?—That is so.

794. That does not lend us very far, does it?—No, except that I hope that he may be of better credit than Bidmead. I hope I have not got 150 Bidmeads to do with. (*A copy of the declaration and the list of canvassers were handed in.*)

795. I think the Committee would like to know precisely about how the petitions are put into shape. The canvasser, who collects the signatures, brings the loose sheets and hands them over to the man whom you employ; is that so?—Yes, that is so.

796. He does not attach them together or to any particular heading?—No.

797. He sends them in a loose form to you?—Yes.

798. And you take them to Mr. Wragg's office?—Yes.

799. There you say they are shifted about and tacked on to whatever heading is suitable?—Yes, that is so.

800. Does not it appear to you that that makes it exceedingly difficult to ascertain the authenticity of a petition when it passes through so many stages without being assigned to anybody at all in particular?—Yes, that has been my great trouble; and now that I know the difficulty, if I had anything to do with such work again, I would have each sheet so that it could be identified. I would have printed on the back of each sheet a declaration, "I, John Tomkins," and so on, "having collected the signatures upon this sheet, am prepared to declare and substantiate my statement that they are true and genuine signatures."

801. You having been responsible for the signatures, what did you do in the way of forwarding them for presentation to the various Members of Parliament?—I initiated their forwarding; I did not actually send them.

802. *Chairman.* Did you send the one to Lord Claud Hamilton from Haggerston?—Yes, that was at my especial instance. I had that sent to Lord Claud Hamilton because I happened to know Lord Claud Hamilton personally, politically of course. I was especially desirous that it should be sent to him.

803. *Mr. Donald Crawford.* I should like the witness to be asked this question: was it you that sent that one to Colonel Hughes?—I did not actually direct that, but I have no doubt that I went into the office and was told, "We have a petition from Greenwich, we have a petition from Woolwich, we have a petition from Clerkenwell, and we have a petition from Camberwell; whom shall they go to?" I, having a good knowledge of the Members of Parliament for the metropolis, would say, "Send such an one to Colonel Hughes, such an one to Captain Penton, such an one to Lord Claud Hamilton, and such an one, &c., &c."

804. Which of your agents would be the one that was employed upon that petition?—That is just my difficulty. I am unable to fix him, and that is why I have prepared my whole list of everybody who was employed. I am unable to fix the petition altogether, except generally to say that it is one of the nine or ten gentlemen that I have given that work to.

805. But you cannot say which?—I cannot.

806. Is not that a very unsatisfactory system; does not it make it impossible to know whether a petition is genuine or not, when you, the gentleman who say you are entirely responsible for the petition, are entirely unable to tell the Committee what agent collected the signatures?—Yes. I admit that that is so; it was a matter of extreme annoyance to me that it could have been so. As I said before, had I known I should have been in any way subject to fraud, or that I could not have depended upon the people I employed, I should have taken measures against it; but unfortunately it is a part of the whole of an unfortunate transaction.

807. You have said that you could explain the names of the racehorses appearing in the petition; what explanation do you give about those signatures?—The gentlemen who were interested in getting these signatures in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, whenever they could get friends, volunteers, to assist them by placing one of these bills in the window at places of public resort and other places where the people would be favourable, and in public-

public-houses and so on, and where people would say, "I could get you some signatures," would leave sheets there; and a number of the sheets which had been so left, when they have come back to us, have been found to be filled up with the most disgusting matter that it is possible to imagine. The explanation of that is just this, that when a petition was left so that it was not under the control of a canvasser, those who were not favourable to the subject of the petition took advantage of its being so left and filled in the objectionable matter, such as is shown upon that sheet. We eliminated in many instances the sheets that contained such objectionable matter, but unfortunately this one passed. As I say, those who are not in favour of the object of the petition take advantage of the petition being within reach to fill up the lines with such matter as they choose.

808. So that these petitions contained sheets of signatures obtained, not merely from the hands of your own agents, but sheets that have been left about in public places?—Yes, the agent makes himself responsible for that.

809. So that you do not think your responsibility extended so far as even to give the necessary cursory examination sufficient to discover the names of race-horses?—Yes, certainly it did; that is to say, not my responsibility, but the responsibility of the staff whom Mr. Wragg employed for the purpose of examining and looking through the petitions. It is manifest that for me to look through 90,000 signatures in six weeks would have been physically impossible. I simply handed in the signatures and went no further. Those men were specially paid for properly checking these things, and it is their carelessness in the matter that has allowed these things to go into the House.

810. Amongst the many thousands of signatures altogether, you are quite unable to tell the Committee where you got them from, and how you got them?—I greatly regret that I am, except the information I have already given to the Committee.

811. Then there is another petition I would like your attention called to, presented by Mr. Forrest Fulton from North-west Ham, which contains the names of Sir Michael Hicks Beach and Mr. Balfour; does the same explanation apply to that petition?—Yes. I would point out the absurdity of anybody on our side putting in our own people. If we did intend to put in anybody to make a butt of, it is not likely that we should have selected our own friends.

812. I shall name rapidly the number of petitions which have been presented upon this subject, and will you have the goodness to stop me if you are not responsible for any one of them. Greenwich, Woolwich, and Deptford; Southwark, Shoreditch and Finsbury; Notting Hill, Stepney and Limehouse; Bromley; Poplar; St. Pancras; East London; City of London; South East London; Dalston and Stoke Newington; Brixton and Peckham; and one or two others; but those are all yours, are they not?—I should say they have all gone through my hands.

813. Supposing it were proved, I do not say it is at all, but supposing it were proved, that all these petitions were to a large extent forgeries, can you give the Committee any explanation of that; you say you are responsible for them?—I can give no further explanation than this, that having handed in to the Committee a list of the whole of the people who have been employed and paid by or through me, I should most earnestly ask the Committee, if they would do so, to sift the matter to the bottom, for my sake as much as for their own.

814. Did not you consider it your duty as the employer in the first place to sift the matter for yourself?—I have. I have sifted the matter so far that I have secured the name of everybody who has received a farthing for the collecting of these signatures. Unless I can compel a man to attend at any special place, which I cannot do, it is impossible for me to put to each man the question, Did you write that signature or did you obtain it.

815. You are unable to be responsible for your own agents?—On the contrary, I have written them most strongly upon the matter, and the statement I have handed in is the outcome of my action. I hold my agents responsible to me. I do not recognise the men who collected the signatures in any way. I gave them proper instructions, and I paid them everything that was asked in the matter; and therefore I hold them responsible along with myself.

816. In

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

816. In your interview with Mr. Wragg, did he see Bidmead and Mr. Hallett in your presence all together, or had he private interviews with them?—He had a private interview with Bidmead. I do not know whether I was present when Mr. Hallett was examined, but if so I was a silent spectator.

817. Mr. Dalrymple.] Mr. Wragg employed you, and you employed Mr. Hallett and the others, but you took no security yourself, as I understand, for the character of the petition?—My security was the character of the men whom I employed. I understood that, and I should have been prepared to trust them to any extent from my past experience and knowledge. Take Carrell, for instance; Carrell has had great experience in petitions.

818. But it did not occur to you to verify the petitions yourself when you received them?—No further than that I have taken the number of sheets that they would hand me, and also the number of signatures that came in. I really trusted that to the examiners, if I may so call them, who prepared the petitions for Parliament.

819. You say you hold your agents responsible, but were you aware of a further delegation to others like Bidmead?—As far as the collection of the signatures went, certainly.

820. But you would admit that there was considerable risk in that repeated delegation of the duty to others?—I do not think there would have been any risk at all if I had only taken the precaution to have each sheet initialed upon the back, with the name and address of the person who took it.

821. But what security would that have been, if the delegation had been so repeated, for the authenticity of the petition?—The security would have been this: that any man who had signed his name at the back of a sheet which might subsequently be proved to be a forgery could be prosecuted for obtaining money under false pretences.

822. You must have been aware of the somewhat random character of the subscriptions to the petitions, if the work of getting them was delegated twice over?—I do not think so. It did not make much difference whether I employed a man that I knew I could trust, or whether the man I employed, employed a man whom he could trust.

823. But you are aware that those whom you employed delegated the petitions to others who examined the petitions?—There were clerks in Mr. Wragg's office, who were specially deputed to examine them.

824. When was it that your attention was called to the defects in the other petitions?—I think it was through the public press.

825. What did you mean by saying that Mr. Clarke's signature enabled you to fix the Haggerston petition?—That did not enable me alone to fix the Haggerston petition; but I knew Mr. Clarke, of the "Brownlow Arms," and that it was 10 to 1 that he was in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties.

826. But was it because the Haggerston petition was before you by itself, or because of Mr. Clarke's signature upon it, that your attention was specially called to it?—Because it was by itself. I did not hear of Mr. Clarke's signature until after I produced Mr. Bidmead's letter, in which Bidmead said that Mr. Clarke's signature was a genuine one; and Mr. Wragg then said to me, "There are three other names; you had better test Bidmead's letter." I had Mr. Clarke's name given me. I then said to Mr. Wragg, "Oh, I think it is all right; I believe Mr. Clarke is with us in the matter;" and I went away quite certain that I should be able to adduce proof that the signature was a good one.

827. Did Mr. Hallett not speak about any other petitions upon the day he came to Mr. Wragg's office?—No.

828. When was it you appealed to Bidmead to make a clean breast of it?—I never appealed to Bidmead myself until afterwards, when he said he had signed 200; when I said, "You had better say what you have done in the matter."

829. Then you did not know that Bidmead had told Mr. Hallett, upon the day he went to Mr. Wragg's office, that he had written the whole of the signatures?—No. I should say he had not told Mr. Hallett upon that day, because he told Mr. Wragg in my presence that he had only forged 200.

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

830. Now I must mention the letter to the Speaker once more. The letter to the Speaker referring to the one petition was not intended, as would naturally appear to us, to cover the case of the other petitions?—Certainly not.

831. Then with regard to what the honourable Member next me (Mr. Lowther) asked you, during how much of the interview of Mr. Hallett and Bidmead with Mr. Wragg were you present?—I daresay I was present during the whole of it.

832. But you must have been going in and out, I suppose?—I daresay I was there during the whole of that interview.

833. You waited until they came, having obtained Mr. Wragg's sanction to telegraph for them; you must be aware whether or not you were there the whole time?—I was. I was there the whole of the time, except that small portion of the interview which, as I have already told you, Mr. Wragg and Bidmead had alone, no one else being present.

834. That was after the confession?—Yes, after Bidmead had made his confession.

835. Mr. *McLagan*.] I understood you to say that you did not allot any particular districts to anybody?—That is so.

836. Then upon what ground did you pay some a large sum and others a small sum, if you allotted no particular district?—I was to a certain extent the trustee of certain money, and being a trustee and an agent I made the very best bargains I could as far as I was personally concerned. After consulting with the various agents, Mr. Hallett said 4 s. or 5 s. was sufficient, and Board or Carvell said they could not do it under 8 s.; the result was that I made the best bargain I could, as I first stated to the Committee. I emphatically stated that I would pay well for *bond fide* signatures, and that I would pay nothing for signatures that were not *bond fide*; that I would rather pay more and have them proper. I did not want to have any cutting down of the price, nor any bother afterwards, or any question about the signatures not being genuine.

837. You paid Mr. Hallett 3 l. 3 s. a week, I think you said?—Yes.

838. And he was employed something like six weeks?—Yes.

839. We have it in evidence that he paid his agents 52 l.?—Yes.

840. And you said you paid him 62 l., I think?—No; I said 52 l.

841. Then he got nothing for the trouble himself?—No; I am quite certain that Mr. Hallett did not get a farthing out of what he did personally.

842. He was working for nothing?—No; he got his three guineas a week, whatever it was. I am sure he paid away every farthing I paid him for disbursements. He lives near my office, and it was not so much trouble to him as to my other agents to come there; they had to come very frequently, but whether they actually paid 8 s. or not I do not know.

843. Mr. *Lowther*.] You said upon some occasion, "We must have proper signatures," and you also said you would pay a good price for *bond fide* signatures?—I said there must be no question as to these signatures being *bond fide*. When a man said to me, "I shall want 8 s. a hundred," I should say, "Is that the lowest you can do them for?" and he would say, "It is the very lowest I can do them for to do the work properly." Then I would say, "Very well, do your work well, and we will have no question about your not being paid sufficiently; let there be no question about your being paid enough; let us have no question about the signatures; I will pay you 8 s."

844. You said "*bond fide*" or "proper" signatures; are you in the habit of seeing improper signatures?—"Proper" was a wrongly-chosen word of mine in giving the evidence. I ought to have said "*bond fide*."

845. You also said "*bond fide*"?—That was in this way. A man would ask 8 s., and I would say, "Do not you think that is rather high?" and he would say, "Well, I do not think I could do the work properly at less than that price;" and I should say, "Well, here is the 8 s., but I must have the signatures properly collected."

846. I do not say you ever paid knowing the signatures to be bad, but did the suspicion never cross your mind that there might be signatures upon the petition which were not put upon it genuinely?—Never. I cannot imagine that

24th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

what could induce anybody, no matter what the rate of pay might be, doing anything so foolish as to himself put a signature to a petition.

847. When the signatures come back through you does anybody revise them?—That would be rather more Mr. Wragg's duty than mine.

848. I should have thought it was Mr. Hallett's?—That is a very important point; I believe every one of those gentlemen will tell you that they did most scrupulously examine these signatures. Mr. Hallett told me when I asked him about the Haggerston petition, "Did you examine it or did you not? If it slipped your notice then say so and we will make the best of it, and say it was a bit of carelessness;" and he said, "Mr. Roberts, I not only looked through the petitions but I called Bidmead's attention to the sheets and I asked him when he saw this man and when he saw the other man;" and Mr. Carrell will tell you the same; I several times asked him as to whether he was being properly careful, and he said, yes; he invariably examined the sheets when they were brought in to him.

849. Who was the agent of the petition presented by Colonel Hughes?—I could only fix it generally, but I should say Mr. Board would be able to tell you better than anybody else.

850. It would have been his duty, would it not, to revise the signatures?—Yes.

851. Does anybody count the signatures, or do you trust to the collectors?—They counted them at Mr. Wragg's office.

852. If they counted the signatures they probably would have seen these things there?—They ought to have seen them; and that is just my complaint against them, that they have not seen them. Those men who did up those signatures in the office ought most certainly to have seen the signatures and cast them out; else what was the use of our paying them week by week for doing work when they were not doing it.

853. Then with regard to your remuneration: is it not usual before undertaking an engagement to settle what your remuneration is going to be?—There was no agreement in this case.

854. Colonel Bridgeman.] How many petitions passed through your hands altogether in this matter?—I could not say exactly, but about 200 I should think altogether.

855. Mr. Tollemache.] You say you were the sole agent employed by Mr. Wragg?—Yes, for getting up these petitions.

856. And you think there were 200?—Yes.

857. If there were 430 petitions presented in favour of this Continuance Bill, would you say that all those 430 petitions passed through your hands; would you say that you had forgotten half of them?—No, I do not think so; I am only speaking of the petitions with the sheets attached. There have been a large number of petitions presented to Parliament from local boards and other people, but I am speaking entirely of petitions with a number of signatures of the public attached to them.

858. There is no one else besides yourself responsible for the petitions to Parliament with signatures?—No.

859. Chairman.] Have you anything to add to the evidence you have already given?—I have to express my regret that I have been the unfortunate means through which this petition has reached the House of Commons. I have explained to you the trouble that I have taken to lay before this Committee all the information which is in my power with regard to the means by which these signatures have been obtained, and I venture to ask the Committee to note, that immediately there was any question as to the genuineness of these signatures, I took every possible step I could to discover where the signature was obtained, and to afford the House of Commons every possible information and help in my power. In expressing my regret, that I would wish to observe, no honourable Member of the Committee has asked me my opinion as to the payment of the 4s. per 100. I just wish to say that there are two ways of paying for petitions, either 4s., or any other sum you like to mention per 100, or paying by the day. Some people imagine it is safer and more secure to pay by the day

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

day instead of paying by the 100. I, myself, have found out that that is an entire fallacy. If you pay by the day, and you have honest men, they may bring you a certain number of signatures. You have other men, however, who crawl through the day, and do as little as possible. You naturally turn to the man who brings you the lesser number, and compare him with the man who does well. Directly you complain of a dishonest man bringing in a small amount of work, you are no more secure from his bringing in forgeries, when paying him by the day, than you are in the case of paying him by the 100. As in registration matters, directly a dishonest man finds that he must do a certain amount of work, or he will be discharged, he resorts to dishonest means when he is paid by the day, just as much as he would if he were paid so much per 100 for his claims. A scale per 100 has further this advantage over a scale per week, that is to say, if a man undertakes to get signatures, and gets an assistant to help him, the two men can get a great many more *bona fide* signatures in a day than one man alone, and that is especially true of factories where a large number of men are congregated together; two men can go together to a factory, and have a table between them, where one man could not do it at all, and so get a lot of signatures. I do not know that this has been done in this case; but in getting these signatures it has, I know, been possible for one man to get at least 250 a day at 4 s. per 100. And to give you one example, there were three or four large drapery firms (I do not give the names) who permitted the sheets to go throughout their establishments, and be signed; and in that way a man would get 300 or 400 signatures from all the people who were favourable to the continuance of the coal and wine dues in a few hours. I might further be permitted to say with regard to Bidmead, that I understand he picked out certain petitions which he said he had forged. My opinion upon the matter, having looked at those petitions, is, that although he tried to pick out the sheets he had forged, he, in picking them out, picked out a great many which were not forgeries. I believe if those petitions were very carefully examined, it would be seen that those 1,600 or 1,700 extended to a great degree, not only over the nine or 10 petitions he picked out, but over the whole of the petitions which lie upon the floor before me.

MR. ROBERT THOMAS WRAGG, sworn; and Examined.

860. *Chairman.*] WHERE do you live?—My place of business is No. 11, Great St. Helens.

861. What are you?—I am a solicitor.

862. Are you also a political agent?—I am.

863. Were you employed in reference to these petitions?—I was.

864. By whom?—I was informed that the authorities, that is to say, those who had received deputations upon the subject of the coal and wine dues, had intimated that a public expression of opinion should come from the Metropolis on the subject.

865. From whom did you receive instructions?—From the City authorities. I, acting in concert with the City authorities, initiated the petitions.

866. Would you explain what you mean by the "City authorities"?—Do you mean with whom I have had intercourse or contact?

867. Yes?—The City Solicitor.

868. What other City officials?—The City Solicitor alone upon this subject.

869. Not with the Remembrancer?—No.

870. Not the Town Clerk?—No, the City Solicitor alone I had interviews with.

871. I may take it that your answer is this, that you received instructions from the City Solicitor to initiate petitions with regard to the continuance of the coal and wine duties?—Yes.

872. Mr. Crawford is the City Solicitor?—Yes; it was after many deliberations I understood an expression of opinion to come from still higher authorities when the deputations were received; there were deputations waiting upon Lord Randolph Churchill, and upon the First Lord of the Treasury, and upon the

26th May 1887.]

Mr. WILKES.

[Continued.]

the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I deduced from the reports in the newspapers that public opinion might be expressed in this mode, by a house-to-house-petition. I understood that that view was so recognised by those on the other side against the coal and wine dues, and that petitions in like manner from house to house had emanated from those who took opposite views to ourselves.

873. Whom do you mean by the "still higher authorities"?—The Government of the day. I believe the first published reports upon this question came out of a deputation which waited upon Lord Randolph Churchill upon the matter, and there were other subsequent deputations and communications passing between the Metropolitan Board of Works, and the City, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

874. Was any scale of remuneration agreed upon with you?—Certainly not; not any scale.

875. To put it plainly, how are you to be remunerated?—By the City authorities.

876. Could you tell the Committee what would be the amount of remuneration?—I cannot.

877. Were you to be paid per day?—Certainly not.

878. Or for the job?—I have had, of course, to act for the Corporation of London before in professional matters, and I have left the sub-committee, or whatever the body is, to treat me fairly with regard to remuneration.

879. What is the particular committee you refer to?—I suppose in this case the management of this particular business would be with the Coal, Corn, and Finance Committee. I generally presume it would be so, although I had no direct communication with them.

880. I take it that you employed certain sub-agents in this matter?—I did. In this matter I employed Mr. Carlton Roberts.

881. Anybody else?—No, I did not, about these petitions.

882. The only person employed by you about these petitions was Mr. Carlton Roberts?—Clearly.

883. Did you know a sub-agent, Mr. Ball, who got up the petition presented by Colonel Hallett?—I do not know him.

884. Was your attention called to the petition collected by him, I think it was, from Greenwich?—Only through the public channels; certainly not before it came to the House.

885. Were you aware that this petition contained the names of certain race-horses?—I was not. I was most pained to discover it, and very much do I regret it. I never saw the petition until I saw it in the Journal Office of the House.

886. Could you suggest any explanation of that?—I cannot. I think it a most unprecedented thing, and a most unpardonable thing. I consider an indignity has been practised upon me as much as upon the honourable Committee.

887. Have you had any communication with Bidmead?—I never saw him; I disavow him entirely; I never saw him until the 27th of April, when he came to my office.

888. He came to your office?—I heard that Lord Claud Hamilton was seriously aggrieved by the Haggerston petition, and I sent for Bidmead. The only person I knew as responsible in the matter was Mr. Carlton Roberts. I told him there was serious complaint by Lord Claud Hamilton, and I sent for him to come and see me. He came upon the Tuesday; I was engaged upon a very important matter, apart from this, with some private clients for two hours in my room, and he could not see me.

889. What day was it he came when he did see you?—On Wednesday the 27th April.

890. Bidmead came with Mr. Hallett to see you upon this matter?—Yes.

891. Was that the first time you ever saw him?—That was the first time I saw him.

892. Will you tell the Committee what was said in your presence with regard to the Haggerston petition?—I was told by Mr. Hallett that he had employed

o.73.

G

Bidmead

9th May 1887.]

Mr. WRAO.

[Continued.]

Bidmead to procure signatures, and I told him to sit down. I examined him, by way of taking down his deposition, a copy of which I have in my hand, and which I presume your honourable Committee has also had. I examined him as if I were a clerk to a magistrate, or as if I were taking evidence in any ordinary action or proceedings.

893. You conducted the examination?—I did personally; I thought it was my duty to do so; I looked upon the matter in a very serious light. I put to him the most searching questions, and I wrote down as much as I thought it was necessary to write down, and I asked him to sign it.

894. Did he sign it in your presence?—He did.

895. Did he, in your presence, admit that he had concocted those signatures?—He said, "As regards Mr. Frederick Clarke, whose signature is at the head of the petition, it is not his signature;" he clearly admitted it. And he said, "I also signed about 300 other names in a disguised hand. I took down the names from the Directory, and I wrote the names at home. I never obtained one genuine signature." Of course I had not the petition before me then, and I was not aware of the number of signatures it contained.

896. Was Bidmead employed with regard to other petitions, or only with regard to the Haggerston petition?—I did not know Bidmead at all; I did not employ him, I left the matter to Mr. Carlton Roberts; I have been engaged with him in a number of political campaigns before, and I have found him able, and careful, and reliable, and I left it to him entirely.

897. Have you paid Mr. Carlton Roberts yet?—No, not yet.

898. Have you paid Mr. Hallett?—I never saw Mr. Hallett until Wednesday the 27th April; I entirely disavow, with all respect for Mr. Hallett, both Mr. Hallett and Bidmead; I never saw either of them until the 27th April.

899. Mr. *McLagan*.] I think you said you had been frequently employed by the City authorities upon other occasions?—I have been.

900. For collecting signatures to petitions?—No, in professional matters.

901. What is the other case in which you have been employed in getting up petitions?—I should say upon the London Government Bill of 1884, there was a petition, a numerically signed petition, as I would call it, to distinguish it from a meeting petition.

902. And you have never had any agreement, as regards money matters, before doing the work?—Clearly; I should never think of stipulating with such a client.

903. And in this case you have made no agreement with Mr. Roberts?—I have not.

904. And I presume you will not pay him anything until you get his account?—No.

905. Do you consider yourself responsible for the genuineness of the signatures?—I should be, if I had not employed a competent person like Mr. Roberts.

906. I was going to ask what steps did you take to ascertain or secure the genuineness of the signatures?—In starting the matter with Mr. Carlton Roberts I told him that, after much deliberation, it had been found desirable to obtain house-to-house petitions, because they had been obtained by the opponents of the coal and wine duties. I do not suppose I said, "Do the work with your usual care," for the subject had been discussed so often; but I have no doubt I requested him to let me have everything done right. I am in the habit of having everything done well, and I do as much as possible in the way of looking after my work. I was here in attendance at this House eight days on an important inquiry.

907. But when we put the question to Mr. Carlton Roberts as to his responsibility, and as to the steps he took as to ascertaining the genuineness of the petitions, he referred us to the particular staff that you had for doing that?—There were clerks to put together the petitions.

908. But not to verify the signatures?—No. I do not know that they had any instructions to do that.

909. They received no instructions to test the genuineness of the signatures?—No. I think they were merely mechanically employed; and, as I said before, I left this matter to Mr. Roberts.

910. And

9th May 1887.]

Mr. Wnagg.

[Continued.]

910. And Mr. Roberts left it to you; so that between the two it came to grief?—And nobody is more sorry for it than I am.

911. Then you, I think, suggested that letter to the Speaker?—No, I think I was asked about it. I was asked, I think, would a letter to the Speaker be a breach of privilege. I could not say what a breach of privilege would be; but it never occurred to me that a simple respectful confession of having done a wrong to the House of Commons would be a breach of privilege, but that it would be only right and proper if he had done wrong that he should acquaint the House of Commons with it.

912. Did Bidmead acquaint you that there were other forged petitions other than the Haggerston petition?—No, else I should have put it down. I did not burry him. I was not in a burry that morning. I am in the habit of taking down evidence.

913. Did Mr. Hallett say anything about it?—No, he did not; I should certainly not have missed such an important point as that.

914. Mr. Dabrymple.] As I understand you, it was the report of the deputations that led to the belief that petitions would be acceptable upon the subject; it was no communication received to the effect that petitions would be acceptable. It was the report of a deputation to Ministers to the effect that a general expression of public opinion would be acceptable?—That was a subject of their deliberations, and that was their impression.

915. Consequently the proceedings were initiated through the City Solicitor; that is to say, in consequence of that impression?—Yes.

916. And you never saw the petitions until you saw them here?—Not these questionable ones; it would have been impossible for me to have missed such things as the race-horse signatures. I take a great interest in sport, and I would not have let them go.

917. We are given to understand that there was a distinct staff engaged in verifying and inspecting the petitions as they came in, which in truth was the only security for their being signed by genuine persons. You say, as I understand you, that although you had a staff of clerks, they had not received any special instructions to verify the signatures, and consequently, as far as you were concerned, there was no security taken that the signatures were genuine?—I hoped and believed that Mr. Roberts was procuring nothing but house-to-house signature. I never dreamed of such a thing as fabricated signatures; it never entered my mind.

918. Will you tell me when you heard of the other forged petitions besides the Haggerston petition?—I think my attention was called to the printed report.

919. You heard nothing of them upon the occasion of the interview with Messrs. Hallett and Bidmead?—No, certainly not; I am certain I should have taken them down as most important points in the evidence if they had been mentioned.

920. Chairman.] You mean the printed report of the proceedings of the House of Commons?—Yes, I think so; that is the first time I ever heard of there being any suggestion of the other petitions being forged.

921. Mr. Donald Crawford.] You were asked about Bidmead's examination, and I think you told the Committee that if he had said anything about forging other petitions you would have been sure to have taken it down?—I think I should; but he did not volunteer anything.

922. Did it not occur to you to press him upon the subject?—I should think I did ask him if he had been engaged in any other petitions.

923. You would naturally ask him that?—I daresay I should ask him that; I had no knowledge of there being any forged petitions then; but I daresay I should have said, "Have you been engaged in any other part of London," because I wanted to find out what the extent of it was, and I should have certainly taken it down if he had admitted anything else; I was very precise in taking down the number of signatures he had admitted having fabricated; I have no object in suppressing anything.

924. But did it not occur to you that when once forgery had been confessed

9th May 1887.]

Mr. WILGGS.

[Continued.]

it was very important to trace it as far as it had gone?—At that time the petitions were in the House, and I came immediately to the House and inspected them; I did not know the process of inspection until I came to inquire.

925. Now, just let me ask you this: the Committee, I think, understand you that you employed Mr. Roberts as a responsible man; but are you aware of the manner in which those petitions were got up with regard to the sheets?—I am now aware of it; I have heard what Mr. Roberts has told the Committee, and I have never questioned how he did his work, he had always seemed to do his work so well. On many points of public business I would go to him to ask his opinion; I was not aware of the actual system; I did not ask him any of the questions which have been put to him by the Committee, or upon any of the points that he has volunteered.

926. But one of the most important steps in the system is stated to have taken place in your office; you were present, were you not, during Mr. Carlton Roberts' examination?—Yes, I was.

927. But you have heard that the sheets come loose into your office, and then by your clerks they are affixed to whatever headings they may think proper; they are pasted together, sometimes put under one heading and sometimes another; there is no system whatever; that is a matter of arrangement after they came to your office; were you aware of that?—I was not, and if they were genuine signatures, I should not see any particular irregularity in it.

928. But does it not increase the difficulty of the identification and of ascertaining whether they are genuine?—I must admit that.

929. It is the case, is it not, that in the first place the sheets are handed by the collector to the sub-agent?—Yes, so I understand they must be, because they are afterwards fastened as you see here (*exhibiting the joins*).

930. Those sheets have no marking whatever upon them; that is to say, no means of identification?—Except the geographical distribution of the signatures. Those (*pointing to some signatures*) are Camden Town, they follow on to Camden-road, and so on.

931. But the sheets have no means of identification themselves upon the back of them?—No, they have not.

932. Are the sheets then handed on by the sub-agent to Mr. Carlton Roberts?—Yes.

933. Then they are handed on again, still without identification, to you?—Yes.

934. So that there is no means of identification as to whether they come from the parties purporting to sign them or not?—Except by the districts.

935. Are you aware that irregularities in the petitions were discovered in the House of Commons, which had escaped detection by Mr. Hallett, by Mr. Roberts, and by you; that is to say, by your clerks?—I am afraid so.

936. Now the City Solicitor, I suppose, set you in motion?—Yes.

937. I suppose he is remunerated for that; it is part of his official duty for which he receives his salary?—I have no cognisance of his engagements.

938. The Committee will draw their own inference as to whether he is remunerated; you, of course, will charge a fee for what you do?—Of course I shall expect to be paid something, but I should not put it in the way of charging a fee; they are accustomed to public business, and they know what it is worth.

939. I think you told the Committee that you were engaged on the Municipal Bill Petition?—I was.

940. Could you tell the Committee what you were paid for that?—I think it came out in evidence; it is in the printed report.

941. It is not before this Committee?—I was paid a fee of 500 guineas.

942. Would you expect to have the same over this business?—No; I was engaged over two Sessions in that case.

943. You have not yet paid Mr. Roberts?—No.

944. But it would be important, I think, for the Committee to know. Supposing those petitions had been all right, and that nothing had occurred, what would you have considered a fair remuneration?—Do you mean for Mr. Roberts?

945. Yes?—I have never discussed the matter with him.

946. The

9th May 1887.]

Mr. WRAGG.

[Continued.]

946. The Committee will be glad if you would give them an idea how much he should have for his six weeks' work?—I should say it was worth from 10 to 15 guineas a week, if there had been no question about it. There will be a great question now, of course, all round about the work.

947. You are aware that he has employed sub-agents whom he pays, or whom you pay?—Yes, he would send me in a statement of his payments.

948. And those sub-agents employed collectors?—Yes, they could not get genuine signatures otherwise, certainly.

949. Then there are several persons to be paid on account of those petitions; the City Solicitor, yourself, Mr. Roberts, his sub-agents, and their collectors; can you point to a single guarantee that the House of Commons or the public have that those signatures are genuine?—A very large number are genuine, as is proved.

950. *Chairman.*] But the question is, is there any guarantee with any of them?—I am considering; I am not evading the question; I have expressed my profound regret to the Committee that there has been any trouble; I am afraid it is a blunder, a *casus omissus*, and that is the worst construction I hope the Committee will put upon it. I am in a very unfortunate position, I feel, technically, that there is responsibility upon me; but it is quite impossible for a man always to be in his office. Those petitions I saw I know were genuine.

951. *Mr. Mulholland.*] With regard to the way in which the petitions were tied up in your office, had you any opportunity of superintending the clerks at all?—Very little.

952. Did you give any instructions as to how they were to put the petitions together?—I think there are some printed instructions; I do not know whether they come from the House, or whether they are Standing Orders, or what.

953. I do not mean as to that, but as to how the petitions should be distrusted?—I do not think I interfered.

954. *Mr. Wiggin.*] I understood you to say that you were instructed by the City Solicitor; is that true?—Yes.

955. And you also instructed Mr. Roberts as your agent?—Yes.

956. Would you tell us, if you please, how many names Bidmead confessed to having forged? 200 you say he mentioned in your presence, but those are not the whole of the forged signatures, I think?—Of course there is no copy of the petitions; when I examined them I had not the petitions before me. He said, "I also signed about 200 others."

957. That was after he admitted having signed Mr. Clarke's name?—Yes.

958. You do not know the total number he forged?—I do not.

959. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] With regard to the separate petition sheets, subsequently joined together, as far as we have heard, it would be possible for the clerks to fix those sheets to other petitions upon totally different subjects. All they get would be loose sheets to which they might fix any heading they might see fit. Would it be possible to fix those signatures to petitions for women's suffrage, for example?—But those would be responsible men whom we employed; they would not do such a thing as that; and then there is the paper which is identifiable.

960. It would be possible to fix them to any other heading for a totally different purpose, as far as the day superintendents in your office is concerned?—Of course there were no other petitions going in my office.

961. But we have no guarantee of that; it would be possible, would it not, that they should be affixed to any other heading?—I must own it would, although I should hope it would not be.

962. Now I will ask you only one other question. As Bidmead said in your office, "I never obtained one single genuine signature," is it not your opinion that Mr. Hallett ought to have suspected that as he had already paid for 1,600 or 1,700 signatures some of the other signatures were not genuine. I gather that Bidmead said to you before Mr. Hallett, "I never got one single genuine signature." That being so, I say, ought not Mr. Hallett to have suspected that some others of the 1,600 or 1,700, for which he paid Bidmead, were not genuine?—As

24th May 1887.]

Mr. WRAO.

[Continued.]

—As I stated, I never saw Mr. Hallett before that morning, and I think he ought to have given me a little more information. I did my best to meet the charge of fraud.

963. Mr. Tollemache.] With reference to what you have been asked by the honourable Member as to the possibility of fixing sheets to another heading, which you say is not likely, there would be no difficulty in affixing the signatures from Poplar to the petition from Bow, for example?—Those would be adjoining districts.

964. There would be no difficulty about it, apparently, because the signatures were not so carefully examined as to lead to the detection of the names of the racehorses?—Poplar and Bow are contiguous as a matter of fact.

965. Let us say Poplar and Camden Town?—That is so; it would be possible, but it would be an incongruous collation.

966. At any rate, the petition need not represent the petition of the district that may be marked upon the outside of it?—No, not necessarily, apparently. Now I may say that I have frequently discussed seriously with the City Solicitor the system of house-to-house petitions; and I may say, though he can speak for himself, that he was against the system, but it seemed to be forced on us by those supporting the Bill, because those who were against the Bill were petitioning Parliament and we felt we must petition; but we had never set lightly by the danger of house-to-house petitions.

967. Mr. Lowther.] Have you anything to suggest which would ensure proper signatures to those petitions; there is no evidence that these papers are properly signed; they are handed in, and nobody seems to look after them after they are handed in?—It would not often happen that there would be such pressure for petitions. It was thought, in the ordinary course of events, that this Bill would be read a second time on the 2nd or 4th of May, and there was a great pressure therefore with regard to this work. But, if there were longer time, I certainly believe, with our fuller experience before us, that there should be a larger staff of men and greater vigilance exercised over the signatures.

968. With regard to the Haggerston petition, who do you think ought to have looked at it?—Mr. Hallett, or certainly Mr. Roberts, as far as I am concerned.

969. Mr. Hallett first and Mr. Roberts second?—Yes.

970. And your office third?—I understand the Committee themselves were misled with regard to some of the signatures.

971. Which Committee do you refer to?—I understand that the report of this Committee only dealt with some of the signatures; that some of the signatures were believed to be genuine; so I mean that you cannot detect a fraud on the face of it throughout.

972. First of all, the responsibility was with you?—From the City Solicitor, certainly; he instructed me with regard to the petitions.

973. Therefore you are in fact responsible for these petitions?—I am responsible certainly, technically.

974. And you handed them to Mr. Roberts?—I handed them to competent hands, as I thought.

975. It was second-hand responsibility. He handed them to Mr. Hallett, and so they came down to Bidmead, but you in fact were responsible for them?—I was to the City authorities.

976. Did you give Mr. Roberts particular instructions with regard to the signatures?—On several occasions I discussed the matter. I said the City authorities wished for house-to-house petitions. I said it was a work of great magnitude, and that it was impossible for me to see after it.

977. You have not got any printed forms with regard to the getting up of petitions, how they ought to be got up, have you?—No, I have not.

978. But you know there are such forms in the House of Commons?—Yes, that the form of the petition should be written and not printed; I have those.

979. Did you give those to those whom your agents employed?—Yes, I think

9th May 1897.]

Mr. WRAGG.

[Continued.]

think I have seen those in the agents' hands. Where they are regular petitions they are observed. (*After a pause.*) Not the instruction which has come out since the matter was before the House, that no one must sign for another person. I did not mean that. I meant that the form of petition must be written or engrossed, not printed, and it must be done on paper or parchment rolled. I never saw any printed instructions with regard to the prohibition of *per pro* signatures.

980. *Chairman.*] What the honourable Member means is the Rules of the House of Commons with regard to petitioning?—I never saw them, but I should not require anything of that kind. I should never think of sending a petition which was not genuine.

MR. CARLTON ROBERTS; further Examined.

981. *Chairman.*] You desire to make an explanation, do you not, with regard to certain points?—With regard to the sheets when they were taken to Mr. Wragg's office, I understood from Mr. Wragg that I had a general responsibility to see these things carried through. He placed at my disposal the staff in his office for the purpose of counting them, looking through the sheets, and attaching them to petitions. It was I, if anybody, who gave instructions how the different sheets should be allocated, to which heading they should be allocated, and I would go in generally and see three or four men at work looking over them; and I would say, "Have you sent yesterday's hatch off?" "Yes; I have brought in so many more this morning, and I want them to go to so-and-so; you will find the sheets belong to such a district here;" and my impression was, and that is what I meant with regard to the racehorses, when I saw the clerks at Mr. Wragg's office carefully looking down the sheets, as I have seen them for days examining them, to see whether there was anything incorrect in the petition.

982. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] Have you ever discovered anything which was not correct?—I have, certainly.

983. And have you thrown them out?—Yes; for instance, I remember there was a whole sheet signed by one man, and a cross against each man; it had evidently been written by one person. The clerk said, "Look here, we cannot send this;" and I said, "Very well, take it out."

984. Then how were you able to settle the payment?—That was just one instance, and very trivial, only two sheets. Each sheet takes about 28 to 30 signatures.

985. You mean simply a cross?—Yes; he put John Tomkins, cross; John Smith; John Simpson, cross; John Smith; and so on. So that it did not appear that they were authorised.

986. Would it not have been better to have had some arrangement as to the sheets that you paid for?—I had such confidence in these men, and I have no doubt that I called the attention of my agents to the fact that certain sheets had been sent in in that way.

987. Was there only one sheet that you passed in that way?—No; I did not consider it was sufficiently glaring; but I have no doubt I said that it was clear the man did not understand his mark, and I pointed it out.

988. *Mr. Dalrymple.*] Where did you discover that?—I discovered it in Mr. Wragg's office.

989. Was that where you discovered the rubbish you mentioned as having been written upon the sheets?—No; that was through one of the agents who was collecting the sheets. My agent brought me out the sheets with the name of Mr. Gladstone and a number of prominent people, and then across the middle was a lot of indecent stuff along with the names of people who had signed *bona fide* names, whom I knew myself. Of course I did not pay him for them.

9th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

990. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] Have you never made any investigation in a case like that where the whole sheet appeared to be fictitious?—Will you allow me to explain that early in the month of April last I gave the word to stop. I wrote round to all the agents that we had enough signatures, and that we did not want any more, and that I was prepared to bring the matter to a close. I said, "I will take all that can be brought in up to a certain date; I am not very particular as to the exact date, but keep it down as much as possible." Directly that note was out, all the sheets that had been left out by people in different places were hastily gathered in to get them in in time. There were more signatures coming into my hands during that week than had come in before. It was from the petitions that came in during that rush, when all these petitions were finally made up from, and that there has been all this question about. The earlier petitions were never questioned in any way; it was only the hurry at the last, when everybody was desirous of getting their sheets in, that these unfortunate mistakes occurred.

991. *Mr. Tollemache.*] When you spoke of the sheet that was signed all through by one man with the marks attached, do you recollect at all by whom that was signed?—I could not say, but I can produce the sheet. I should have brought it to Mr. Wragg's office the previous morning. The clerks would then have sorted the petition up, and would have come across that sheet.

992. Might we ask for that petition?—I think I can produce it.

993. When there was a cross and a name by the side of it, you did not think that man was witnessing the signature?—I thought it might have been so, but the cross had been so palpably put by someone. I may say that I had the proof myself of the way in which the work was done, which was very satisfactory. A man called upon me to sign one of these very petitions; he had got everything most satisfactorily arranged; he had got the petition most regularly; he had heading paper. He said, "I have a petition here in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; would you do me the favour to sign, Mr. Roberts?" I said I had already signed the petition, but you may go downstairs and ask the men. If they like to sign it they may leave off their work for a few minutes for the purpose; so I thought that it was being perfectly properly carried out. And then, again, it very often happens that when a man is signing a petition at a factory he will be asked by his mates to sign it for them, and he will do that. I do not, of course, approve of that, but in that way a petition may be signed by three people in the same handwriting in three consecutive signatures or more.

Mr. JOHN LLOYD, sworn; and Examined.

994. *Chairman.*] I BELIEVE you are the Honorary Secretary to the Anti-Coal Tax Committee?—I am a Justice of the Peace for the County of Brecon; I am Honorary Secretary of the London Municipal Reform League, and also of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee.

995. Have you any information to give the Committee with regard to the subject of this inquiry?—I have this information to give, first of all, as regards our own petitions; we have sent in a very large number to the House of Commons against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; those petitions are upon your register, and as far as I know they have been honestly collected and *bonâ fide* signed, and I believe I am able to identify any one of them if it is called in question; we sent them to the Members of Parliament connected with the districts in which they were obtained, with a note in each case informing them that such a petition was sent. The letter books which I have here would enable me to trace each petition, the number of signatures upon it, and the Member of Parliament to whom it was sent; we did not send the letter in the same enclosure as the petition, because the Rules of the House of Commons are against it. I rather think it is a rule which leads to one parcel being disconnected from another. The rule of the Post Office is that the petition must be sent

24th May 1887.]

Mr. LORD.

[Continued.]

sent open, and that prevents your sending it accompanied by an ordinary letter. Still I should say in our case we have always sent a letter to the Member of Parliament at the same time as the petition was sent, and I shall be happy to answer any questions with regard to any petitions that we have sent.

996. You had nothing to do with the petitions from the other side; merely with what you sent yourself?—Only with those against the coal and wine duties; we are a committee formed for the purpose of preventing the passing of the Coal and Wine Duties Bill.

997. Therefore all you come to do is to testify to the genuineness of your petitions?—I have no reason to doubt that every petition has been properly obtained and properly signed.

998. You have a list of the petitions you sent in?—Yes, I believe of all those that we sent in.

999. Mr. Lowther.] You say you see they are properly obtained and properly signed; how do you know that?—We take the proper steps.

1000. What are the proper steps?—We employ proper persons.

1001. That is to say, those whom you believe to be proper persons?—Yes; and we verify the petitions as far as possible.

1002. But you cannot verify them everywhere?—No, you cannot go everywhere.

1003. How do you know they are *bona fide* signed?—They appear to be authentic, and the signatures appear to be *bona fide* in the handwriting of the parties whom they represent; I know a great many signatures from my experience in London; I know a great many of the people's signatures to these petitions.

1004. What number would there be in each?—There is a petition here (*referring to the list handed by the Clerk*) with 503 signatures; Mr. Caudle got that, and it was presented by Mr. Pickersgill.

1005. Do you know the whole of those 503 signatures?—No, I do not think we sent in that petition from our office; that was sent in by Mr. Caudle, but the engrossing was paid for by us.

1006. You have stated that you saw that the signatures were properly obtained and that the petitions were properly signed?—Yes, all those that have gone through us.

1007. Will you take one that has gone through you?—I have a petition from this list presented through Mr. Chamberlain; I will refer to the letter-book and see if we sent it to Mr. Chamberlain.

The Witness was about to refer to his letter-book.

1008. Will you give me the name of any one petition that you did send in?—I cannot without examination, for this reason: that we have presented something like 250 or more petitions, and which of those in this special list which I have seen now for the first time, we presented I do not know.

1009. You have presented about 250, signed on the average by 100 people, shall we say?—Yes.

1010. That would give you 25,000 signatures?—Yes.

1011. Would you undertake to say that all these signatures were properly obtained and properly signed?—No; but we have employed respectable persons to obtain them, and as far as I am able to see, they have been *bona fide* without the least suspicion of fraud.

1012. You have never found amongst the signatures you have got any fraudulent signatures?—No.

1013. Colonel Bridgeman.] Have you ever taken out a fiftieth part of the signatures, say the fiftieth name, to see if it was genuine?—We have gone as far as this, that we have employed a detective officer.

1014. To ascertain that your own signatures were genuine?—No, but to a certain that our opponents' signatures were not genuine.

1015. Mr. Tollemache.] Your committee are interested in the rejection of a certain Bill?—Yes.

1016. And I suppose they subscribe?—Yes.

1017. And you are their secretary?—Yes, honorary secretary.

o.73.

H

1018. Are

24 May 1887.]

Mr. LLOYD.

[Continued.]

1018. Are you instructed to take any steps to secure that object?—Yes.

1019. What steps were to be taken?—Among other ways, to employ certain persons to get signatures. In the first place we have a large voluntary connection throughout London, and from those we have got a very large number of signatures without any paid employment whatever; the employment of paid persons was subsidiary to that. I should say that we have got more signatures a good deal from unpaid than from paid efforts.

1020. How many agents did you employ for this collection?—About four or five I have employed.

1021. I suppose you could give the Committee their names?—Yes, and their addresses.

1022. And those, I suppose, would be head agents?—No; one of these gentlemen in the room, Mr. Wilson, had some of the work to do; he is a member of the committee himself, and he employed sub-agents. With the exception of Mr. Wilson there has been no other person employed as the head agent; the others have all been the actual persons who collected the signatures; they came to the office and brought their reports in.

1023. Could you give the Committee the names of the others?—Yes, I have the names here.

1024. Will you put in the names?—The list is as follows: W. Æ. Smith, 12, Ashburnham-road, Chelsea; J. Woodmansee, 1, Mawbey-road, Old Kent-road, S.E.; J. Hall, 102, Whitechapel-road, E.; J. T. Hughes, 56, Angrave-street, Haggerston, E.; J. Donald, 137, Victoria Cottages, Mile End Old Town; W. Norrish, 2, Fowler-street, Camberwell; and also N. Wilson, 102, Southampton-row, W.C.

1025. What payments were made to them?—The payments come to 123*l.* 14*s.*, including 20*l.* for the detective officer.

1026. How do you pay; so much a hundred?—No.

1027. Do you pay by the job?—Mr. Wilson had 40*l.* voted for him to get signatures from the workshops in the particular way which he thought would be an efficacious and proper way. He had 40*l.* voted to him out of the 103*l.*, so that I have only spent 60*l.*; 10*l.* of that was for paper and printing; the amounts paid have been very small.

1028. What happens to those sheets after they have been collected?—There is one here now which you may see; the sheets were sent out tied up securely together with green tape; they were brought back to us in that shape. I myself had never much to do with petitions before in my life, and when the London Government Bill was on we scarcely took any petitions whatever nor issued any circulars; we thought it would be no use; and it is only in this instance that we have done it to any extent. What we have done has been to send out sheets of paper with the written heading, where we thought they were likely to be circulated; six or seven sheets pinned together and fastened with a tape; they came back to us in that form; we never separated them or disconnected them in any way whatever. Mr. Pickersgill presented Mr. Caudle's petition with 500 names to it; but subsequently Professor Stuart stated to us that petitions were not allowed to be sent in if they were only tied together. From that day on we disconnected them and pasted them together in our office, but practically they came to us in the same shape as that in which we had sent them out, not at all disconnected one from the other; and I believe I shall be able to trace each person who had to do with any particular petition.

1029. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Are we to understand that the whole sum expended in getting up your petitions was only 123*l.*?—Yes, including 20*l.* to the detective.

1030. How did the detective obtain access to the petitions in favour of the continuance?—I believe under certain conditions you can obtain access to see the petitions.

1031. Had he instructions to see the petitions?—Yes; he asked me for money to pay the fee.

1032. Mr. *Tollenache*.] When; before this business came into the newspapers?—I believe he came here the day before it got into the paper. It was very nearly contemporaneous with that.

1033. Mr.

9th May 1887.]

Mr. LLOYD.

[Continued.]

1033. Mr. Donald Crawford.] I think you said that your society presented upwards of 200 petitions?—About 250.

1034. It is a large number?—A very large number have gone through our office directly or indirectly.

1035. Representing about 25,000 signatures?—Yes.

1036. May I ask how many of those were obtained through your own agency in the manner you have described?—It is very hard to say; about half, I should suppose; we have a large voluntary connection through London. The leaders of these bodies we are connected with passed, first of all, resolutions at the different clubs in favour of the abolition of the coal and wine dues; then we asked them to petition Parliament, and so in answer to our application they sent us nearly half our total number of signatures.

1037. Then you would think that the other half would be obtained through your own paid canvassers?—Yes.

1038. I think you have given the Committee the names of seven canvassers?—Yes, I have.

1039. Did you engage those men personally?—Yes, I did.

1040. Did you know anything of their antecedents before you engaged them?

—Yes; one man came to me with a recommendation from a person whom I knew perfectly well; I took him upon that recommendation, and he has proved a very reliable man. In every case I took every pains to ascertain that it was a thoroughly responsible person who undertook the work.

1041. You have given the Committee the total of what was paid; but what sum did you arrange for each paid canvasser to receive?—Five shillings a day is about what the men who did the work had.

1042. Chairman.] Irrespective of the number of signatures they collected?—As far as that is concerned no payment was made at all for numbers, none whatever.

1043. Mr. Donald Crawford.] You tell the Committee that you handed out the headings with a number of sheets tied together?—Yes, they were tied together with green tape generally.

1044. So that unless those sheets were improperly untied, the person who signed had the heading of the petition before him, and he signed below it?—Yes.

1045. And the petition was returned to you in the same form?—Yes.

1046. And sent by you to the House in the same form?—Yes.

1047. Until you got a hint that they should be pasted together and not tied or sewn?—Yes.

1048. How long did it take you to collect those petitions?—We began late; we did not begin till about six weeks or two months ago, say about the 1st of February.

1049. Did I understand you to say that you have always addressed a letter to the Member of Parliament whom you desired to present the petition?—Yes.

1050. And accordingly it was in the power of the Member to have recourse to you if he thought there was anything wrong about the petition that was sent to him?—Yes.

1051. To what extent were these petitions examined either by you or by anybody under your orders?—We opened the roll and looked down the list, and we would see first of all that the names were more or less appropriate to the district. Sometimes the headings at the top would not be filled up, or if we saw more of Camberwell names than of Bow names, we should read the petitions accordingly. In taking petitions in London the names are very mixed, because a man may be living over the water, and he may be working where you get his signature, so we looked the list through to see where the people lived, and also we took pains to see, as far as we could make it out, that there were no names improperly entered; but no doubt, in dealing with petitions like this, you must be liable occasionally to find things improperly done.

1052. Have you found anything wrong?—No; one man I pressed very hard in a case in which I thought the handwriting looked as though it was copied; he assured me the names were not copied, so I ultimately passed the petition.

G-73.

H 2

1053. What

9th May 1887.]

MR. LLOYD.

[Continued.]

1053. What instructions did you give to the detective?—Apart from the petitions you are now engaged in examining name by name, there are a number of petitions of what I may call a bogus character; that is to say, petitions from small meetings supposed to have been held; for that reason amongst others, we employed a detective to examine them.

1054. You employed him to examine the petitions which were contrary to your own views?—Yes; and of course in doing so he obtained more or less information about our own men canvassing, and so on, through London.

1055. He kept his eye on your men?—He told me that our men were canvassing for signatures.

1056. Perhaps I may say some doubt has been thrown upon some of the signatures to your petitions. (*The petition from Bethnal Green being exhibited to the Witness.*) Do not some of those red signatures appear to you to have some great similarity?—(*After examining signatures in red ink.*) I think there is more than one handwriting here, although one or two may be written by the same people.

1057. There is more than one handwriting, undoubtedly; but does not it appear as if several were written by the same hand?—To be an expert in caligraphy is a very difficult thing; I should say that those signatures were written at the same time and with the same pen, and with the same kind of ink; certainly there is a similarity between some of them, but I would not like to undertake to say they were written by the same person.

1058. They would not excite your suspicion?—This petition, I think, we did look at for some time, and I think we came to the conclusion that it was genuine.

1059. In the case of each of those petitions brought in by your own canvassers would there be any difficulty in discovering which of the canvassers obtained signatures to a particular petition?—We could tell you that, I believe. I may say that part of the heading, the Humble Petition of the inhabitants "of Bethnal Green, in the County of Middlesex," is my own writing.

1060. But that is not my question; it is of importance to the Committee to know whether the petitions can be traced to their origin or not. In the case of each of your petitions are you able to tell the Committee which canvasser obtained the signatures?—I believe we can.

1061. How can you tell it?—First of all, we should probably have received the petition from some one to whom we acknowledge it.

1062. I do not quite understand what you mean by that?—A petition might be sent, or it might be brought to us, and we should acknowledge the receipt of it, if it were sent.

1063. That you would find in the letter-book?—Yes.

1064. But the petitions would be generally brought to you, would they not, by the canvassers?—Of course there is no rule with regard to that; there is more or less a difficulty in tracing out each individual petition, but I believe it can be done.

1065. Mr. Tollemache.] Is this the petition upon which you said just now that you cross-examined one of your canvassers very closely?—No; it was the Camberwell petition, presented by a man named Norrish, whom we employed; he was engaged in South London.

1066. Could you tell the Committee where he lives?—No. 2, Fowler-street, Camberwell.

1067. He satisfied you that the signatures were genuine?—Yes; I pressed him very hard upon that point.

Tuesday, 10th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir Charles Forster.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. William Lowther.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Viscount Lymington.
Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Henry Toller-mache.
Mr. Wiggin.

SIR CHARLES FORSTER, IN THE CHAIR.

ON THE KING'S CROSS AND ST. PANCRAS PETITION
AGAINST THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COAL AND WINE DUTIES,
PRESENTED BY MR. R. G. WEBSTER ON THE 6TH MAY 1887.

MR. CHARLES STEWART GRAHAM, sworn; and Examined.

1068. *Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At 135, Bayham-street, Camden-road, N.W.

1069. What are you?—A clerk.

1070. To whom?—I am clerk, temporarily, to Mr. R. G. Webster, Member of Parliament for East St. Pancras.

1071. You are clerk to the honourable Member who presented the petition?—Yes.

1072. Have you made inquiries connected with these petitions?—Yes; I had the petition now in question handed to me by Mr. Webster, asking me to make some inquiries. I called upon 30 of the signatories, and out of the 30 I found there were 10 defaulting.

1073. What do you mean by "defaulting"?—Ten not as described upon the petition.

1074. Do you mean 10 not known, or 10 improperly described?—Improperly described.

1075. *Viscount Lymington.*] But real signatures; that is to say, that the people signed them although they were not properly described, is that so; were they genuine signatures?—No, the 10 were not genuine signatures. The result of my examination is the following: five not known, two boys under age; in one case the wife stated to me that it was not her husband's signature; another did not sign or authorise any one to sign for her, and in another case the name was known, but the person did not live at the address as stated.

1076. You say that there was one case under age; how do you know that?—I was shown two boys, and I was told that one was under 18 and the other 16.

1077. What was the petition?—It was a petition against the continuance of the Coal and Wine Duties.

1078. Then are there only 30 signatures to the petition?—No; they are described as being 82 signatures upon the petition, but there are only 81, as one is erased.

1079. Out of the 81, I want to know how many are forgeries?—I only called upon 30, as I had not the time to spare to go further.

0.73.

H 3

1080. Have

10th May 1887.]

Mr. GRAHAM.

[Continued.]

1080. Have you anything else to say to the Committee?—Nothing, except that I can give the names and addresses of the parties I called upon.

1081. *Chairman.*] Would you describe which of the five are not known?—There is a man described as C. H. Huntley, journalist, 82, Judd street; that is all upon the petition.

1082. *Mr. Lowther.*] Does he exist?—I could not find any such person at 82, Judd-street.

1083. What was the next?—The next is a person described upon the petition as J. Jacob, labourer, of 12, Cromer street; that is not known. The next is a person of the name of W. S. Mostin; I interpret the writing here as "general dealer," living at 1, Prospect-terrace. The next is someone by the name of W. Beaum, 64, Harrison-street; there is no such number, and the man is not known; I inquired as near to that as I could. The next is a person named J. Smith, 15, Ossulston-street; there is a person there of the name of Mary Smith, but she did not sign any petition for or against the coal and wine duties, nor did she authorise any one to sign for her.

1084. This man is described there as of 15, Ossulston-street, carpenter?—Yes. Then there were two boys under age, named Grellier, both residing at 211, Gray's Inn-road; one described as a compositor, and the other as a vellum binder.

1085. Did you see them?—I saw one of them, and I saw the father.

1086. How old was the one you saw?—I should take him as a chap of about 16, as near as I could tell; and the father told me that the other one was 18 years of age; he was not in the shop.

1087. *Mr. Tollemache.*] Then there were two who did not sign?—There was a W. Sadler, described as a shutter-maker, of 39, Cromer-street. The wife states that the signature is not that of her husband.

1088. Viscount *Lymington.*] Then there is another one that you find is not a genuine signature?—There is W. Smith. I have given the incidents as to that.

1089. *Mr. Lowther.*] Do you know at all how those signatures were obtained?—Yes; these signatures were obtained at one place where there was a petition in the street. I do not know any further.

1090. But you do not know it was this one?—No, I do not know that.

1091. Did you find that any of them were correct?—Yes; I found that 20 out of 30 were correct.

1092. But you did not hear from them under what circumstances they signed the petition?—No, I did not.

1093. It was in the street?—It was in the street. I was informed by one person that he signed it in the street.

1094. Was there anybody attending to it; there would not be a petition out in the street without somebody attending to it?—No. I understood there was a table in the street, with a man attending to it, with the petition, and he asked people as they went by to sign it.

1095. Where was that?—In the Gray's Inn-road.

1096. Did you ask who the man was?—I did not.

Mr. ROBERT GRANT WEBSTER (a Member of the House), Examined.

1097. *Chairman.*] I BELIEVE you are Member for East St. Pancras?—I am.

1098. And you presented some petitions with regard to this question?—I did, on Monday, the 2nd instant. I went to the Cloak Room of the House of Commons, and I there received this petition in the Cloak Room. I received the same morning a covering letter from Mr. John Lloyd, of Lancaster House, Savoy, mentioning that this petition had been sent to me. I did not present that petition at that particular time, but I handed it, as has been stated by the previous witness, Mr. Graham, to him, to go to the St. Pancras district to find
cut

10th May 1887.]

Mr. WEBSTER, M.P.

[Continued.]

out the accuracy of the signatures, and he gave me precisely the same information regarding that petition as he has given to the Committee. On the 5th of May I went to the Speaker, and asked him what I ought to do with this petition, saying that there were 10 false signatures upon it. The Speaker said he thought that as there were some legal signatures upon it I was able to present it, but that I ought to write a covering letter to the Committee on Public Petitions, to inform them of the facts that had come to my knowledge.

1099. And you did present that petition, did you not?—I did present that petition.

Mr. NEWTON WILSON, sworn; and Examined.

1100. *Chairman.* WHAT are you?—I am a mechanical engineer, of the firm of Newton Wilson & Company, well known as sewing-machine manufacturers for the last 33 years.

1101. Where do you reside?—26, Hildrop-road, Camden-road, Holloway.

1102. I believe you are prepared to give the Committee some information with regard to the petitions now before them?—I am; I have had to do considerably with these petitions during the last five weeks. I am a member of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, and I am a member also of the Executive Committee of the Municipal Reform League.

1103. Do you know Mr. Lloyd?—I know Mr. Lloyd exceedingly well; at a recent meeting of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, I suggested that the work of the petitions had not been sufficiently carried out, and that if they were so disposed I would undertake a certain work myself, especially that of putting out petitions amongst manufacturers all over London. The result of it was that the committee resolved to place a certain sum of money, then 30 l., at my disposal for the purpose, and I engaged a number of men, at least, several responsible men whom I could trust, to take out the petitions which I had prepared, and leave them at various establishments all over the Metropolis, north, south, east, and west, but chiefly north and south, south-east, and south-west, extending from Lambeth to Deptford, and a great part of Islington and that district. I sent out in that way over 200 petitions, and I have collected back some 120 with signatures upon them, and about 50 blanks. Out of those 120, 92 have been presented to the House of Commons. In some cases I should explain to the Committee that I found the signatures so few upon some of them, that I appended other sheets which I had from the same district, so as to amalgamate them; they all came in from the same districts. The men engaged upon that work were all paid by time, so much per day, and they were paid their expenses in addition, such as the expenses of going to and fro, and everything of that kind; nothing more than that; nothing for refreshments or anything of that kind. Those petitions were all presented between the 25th of April and the 3rd of May inclusive; at least they were sent in by me. They amounted to 92 petitions, containing 11,505 signatures, and I have every reason to believe, as far as I know, having the evidence I have just heard from Mr. Webster and his clerk, that the signatures are in every case genuine. In the particular case in question I should like to see the petition, because it is one of those that I have forwarded. I am satisfied of that. (*The petition was handed to and inspected by the Witness.*)

1104. Do you see there the signatures which Mr. Webster noticed as being inaccurate?—I recollect particularly this sheet; I recollect receiving it, and I recollect objecting to it, and I recollect expressing my indignation at the appearance it presented.

1105. *Mr. Tollemache.* Upon what ground?—Upon the ground that the man in charge, or some one at the stand, had knocked the ink-bottle over it. Those signatures were taken in the Gray's Inn-road, near King's Cross; they were taken through the medium of other parties, to whom I will refer, who had applied to me and said, "If you will allow me, I will put a man just opposite Cobitt's yard to take the signatures from the men," and I said I had no objection; and the man that I employed paid the other men outside.

0.73.

H 4

1106. Was

10th May 1887.]

Mr. WILSON.

[Continued.]

1106. Was that out of what you gave him?—No, he sent me in a separate charge.

1107. Viscount *Lymington*.] But you were allowed 30 L., were you not?—Yes. I was given 30 L. at this time to lay out; I have to account for what I lay out, and I have to present my accounts to the Committee when they are complete. Those signatures were obtained at a table in the Gray's Inn-road exactly opposite, as I believe, Cubitt's yard. But of all those signatures that I have caused to be collected and presented, I have scrutinised every sheet, and passed none which I had reason to think were in any way doubtful; and in order to provide for the identification of those sheets at any time, I not only took the addresses of the men who were concerned in them, but I numbered the petitions consecutively; and I believe it is possible therefore to produce in 24 hours the man who witnessed the signature of any person on any sheet that I have caused to be presented to the House of Commons.

1108. There are certain names in the petition you have before you which Mr. Webster's clerk, a previous witness, gave to us; there is "C. H. Huntley, 82; Judd-street"?—I have that name before me, "Journalist, 82, Judd-street."

1109. Do you know that man?—No, I do not know personally any of these signatories.

1110. Could the Committee have evidence that he did sign it?—I think it is very likely. I should not doubt the genuineness of the signature, even after the statement of Mr. Webster's clerk.

1111. But you said that you had no doubt that within 24 hours every signature in the petition could be verified?—To this extent, that the man who received the signatures could be produced, who would be prepared to say that the person so representing himself signed the petition in his presence; but he could not guarantee the signature, nor could any man guarantee the signature.

1112. Have you a note of the man who witnessed this signature?—Yes, I have his name and address.

1113. What is his name?—I could not give it you off-hand, but I have the names and addresses of all those men at my office.

1114. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Could you tell me by what means you could identify that; where is the mark or number?—I have not marked upon each individual sheet, but upon each individual petition there is a pencil mark. This petition comprises a few additional sheets which have been added; those have been added from the signatures that were taken; and looking at this smear, I have no doubt from this fact that the signatures were all taken from a table in the Gray's Inn-road, outside Messrs. Cubitt's yard. I could put my finger on the man in a moment.

1115. Mr. *Wiggin*.] What is the number of that petition?—This is one that was left in the first place at Sage's, in the Gray's Inn-road, and it is marked by my representative's own mark, "Sage"; it has no consecutive number, but it has a number in my list; it has not a number upon it, because the first batch that went out, and this is one of them, had not been numbered; the numbers were appended in my own registered list.

1116. That has no number?—It has no number, but it has a name upon it, and the name will be found in my registered list.

1117. *Chairman*.] Has your attention been called to the fact of two boys under age signing it, residing at 211, Gray's Inn-road?—Yes.

1118. Have you any explanation to make about that?—I have no explanation to give upon that, but the remark I would make upon that is this, that there is no evidence of age, and in the next place I would say, that although I had given directions to those who were getting signatures that no signatures of boys were to be taken, yet anyone of 18 might have been taken. At 18 many a boy looks a man, but there was not in that witness' evidence any proof of the age of the boy; it was simply his estimate, which might be very wide.

1119. Mr. *Tollemeche*.] There is no proof all through the petition of the age or the residence of any one?—No, certainly not; but care is taken to exclude children. Signatures taken in the street are open peculiarly to this objection, that

10th May 1887.]

Mr. WILSON.

[Continued.]

that they are open to anybody writing anything upon them, and writing anything upon them before the person in charge of the petition can see what is written upon it. In the case of these two boys I do not think it is open to any question at all.

1120. Mr. *Louther*.] How many of these petitions passed through your hands?—Ninety-two.

1121. And how many signatures altogether, do you know?—There were 11,505 signatures.

1122. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] You said you felt indignation at the appearance of that sheet; that, I understand, was owing to its inky condition?—Precisely; it was owing to its discreditable condition.

1123. It had not occurred to you that there was anything not genuine upon it?—Nothing whatever.

1124. And you say that the evidence just given by Mr. Webster's clerk does not impress you, and you retain the belief that the signatures are all genuine?—No, I would not say that. I think it is quite possible that the evidence may apply to some of them; but what I said was, I think, that until I heard the evidence of Mr. Webster's clerk I had not the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of any of those signatures; but I should like now to question some of that evidence. With regard to this journalist, I should have no doubt that it is a perfectly true signature. I have here a list of the petitions I sent in; they are marked consecutively; the number of the signatures to each, the title of each, and when sent in upon each day from 25th April to 3rd May inclusive.

1125. But your statement that petitions in the streets are particularly open to mistakes, by reason of the fact that anyone may come and write anything he likes upon them, would certainly lend probability to the belief that upon the sheet there were some signatures which were not genuine?—Certainly; no amount of care could absolutely exclude that.

1126. Therefore, I want to know, having that impression about petitions lying in the street, why do you consider it so improbable that there should be some signatures which are not genuine?—I do not think it improbable, I think it probable that there would be some signatures that are not genuine; but a man as a rule has no object in forging the name of another man to a petition, or in putting any false name to a petition, he gets no consideration for it. But still some people will do these things; in the very centre of a sheet like this I saw the name of "James Outsider, billiard sharper." I cut that sheet in three, I cut out the objectionable signatures and used the rest, and did so legitimately.

1127. Do you attach any importance to petitions which lie on tables in the streets, which, as you say, are liable to be used by anyone?—Yes, because I think that is the only way in which you can get the signatures of the working classes; you can get at them going to and from their avocations, but it is impossible to get at them at their own homes. What distinguishes the petitions I have collected has been this, that they have been to a very large extent filled by the signatures of working men.

1128. Do you think that a working man would attach as much importance to petitions lying on a table in the street as to a petition which was brought to him in his own home?—I think he would, quite as much.

1129. I only ask for information; do you think they attach as much importance to the one as to the other?—My memory goes back a long way; I have seen signatures taken in this way ever since I was a child, and I have never yet heard any effective objection raised to this mode.

1130. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Do I understand you to say that you consider that it is the better mode of the two?—I consider it is the more effective mode.

1131. And therefore you have practised it?—I have practised it to a certain extent as I have indicated; the major part of those petitions have been received from workshops where, in the first instance, the principal has signed first, and a number of his employés afterwards; workmen, salesmen, clerks, and others, as the case may be; but a great number of the petitions have been taken in the streets at well-known places, and in that way various petitions have gone from different districts such as St. Pancras, and have been presented by Mr. Webster.

I

1132. You

10th May 1887.]

MR. WILSON.

[Continued.]

1132. You can understand that some error will creep in?—Undoubtedly.

1133. You have heard the evidence given this morning with regard to the 30 signatures?—I beg pardon; I did not know there were 30 named. I heard the statement with regard to 10, but I did not hear it with regard to 30.

1134. There was evidence given with regard to the 30 signatures of which it was stated that 10 were bad. You have stated, I think, that you rather demurred to the boy's signatures being considered as bad because their age might not be known?—I said, at that time of life.

1135. Let us leave out the boys for a moment; there are eight signatures which are said to be unauthentic?—Yes.

1136. That is then one-fourth of 30?—Should it not be rather taken in proportion to the total signatures upon the petition?

1137. Only 30 signatures have been examined; I am asking you, is not eight more than a fourth of the 30 that were examined?—Undoubtedly.

1138. If it were true that more than a fourth of a batch of 30 were bad, that would very seriously impair the value of the petition?—Of that particular petition I should say.

1139. After hearing the evidence that you have heard, is it your opinion, as far as you can form an opinion, that those eight signatures are bad or not?—I should decline to express an opinion; I should decline to form one until I had an opportunity of examining the facts myself. I will not question the evidence which has been given as far as its truthfulness is concerned, but I am not prepared to admit it without an entire examination of my own.

1140. Would you be prepared to furnish the Committee with an examination and explanation of these 10 signatures which have been impugned?—If the signatures are copied out and given to me, I shall be very happy to undertake such an examination, and report the result.

1141. I suppose your exertions in this matter are gratuitous, are they not?—Absolutely. I have been an active member of the Municipal Reform League since its formation. I have addressed something like 30 public meetings on this question within the last three months, and in no case have I asked or received a single penny, even for my expenses.

1142. Is Mr. Lloyd an honorary secretary or a paid secretary?—He is an honorary secretary absolutely.

1143. *Chairman.*] He is a Justice of the Peace, is he not?—Yes.

1144. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] You said something about one of your men employing another. I want to know whether you would suggest to the Committee that there was less care in regard to this petition than the others?—I am scarcely competent to form an opinion upon that point, because it came to me through an intermediary; not direct, as it were; it came through a man I primarily engaged, who was engaged to a considerable extent in putting those petitions out in the works, and I have told the Committee that this was actually collected from one of the works where it only had three signatures. Then it went on, and was filled up with outside signatures. The man said to me, "I had rather not bring it back until I have got some more signatures to it;" but he had previously applied for my permission to adopt this plan.

1145. You do not suggest that this petition is worse than the others?—No, I do not know that I should. I have not made any comments upon that. My observation would hardly justify that, I think, or any conclusion to be drawn from it.

1146. *Viscount Lynton.*] You stated to an honourable Member (*Mr. Donald Crawford*) that you would be prepared to furnish an explanation of those signatures, to investigate those 10 signatures?—I should be glad to do so; I do not tender any evidence now, but I should be glad to undertake the investigation.

1147. But when could you give the Committee the result of your investigation?—Within two days.

1148. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] Could you say how many of the 92 petitions were collected in the streets?—I could not.

1149. Have

10th May 1887.]

Mr. WILSON.

[Continued.]

1149. Have you any idea as to the proportion?—I could give you a better idea as to the proportion; that is to say, the proportion of the total signatures.

1150. What proportion of the total number of 11,000 signatures would you think were obtained in the streets?—Fully half.

1151. Would the 30 *l.* represent the total cost of collecting these signatures?—No; I am out of pocket now, but I have not sent in my account; whatever I spend beyond that the committee will accord to me when I send in my account.

1152. But I thought you conveyed the impression that 30 *l.* was the extent of your expenditure?—No; they first voted me 30 *l.*, and subsequently another 10 *l.*

1153. How much do you think you have already expended?—I should think, roughly, altogether, 52 *l.* or 53 *l.*

1154. Mr. Wiggan.] You have heard the last witness state that there were five signatures upon that petition from residents who deny having signed them. Now would it be possible for the persons to have signed those signatures in the streets, giving the address that is stated in the petition, and for that address to be untrue; is it possible that any of these signatures which are said to be false might have been signed by persons in the streets giving a false address?—Yes. It is an unreasonable supposition, but not an impossible one, for this reason: a man will sign his name and occupation, and the like, and is perhaps ashamed of his address, and puts another; there would be cases of that kind, no doubt.

1155. Chairman.] The Committee would like to have an explanation, and they would be quite willing to prolong the inquiry to Thursday?—I should like to ask whether this petition might be entrusted to me, as otherwise I cannot get the men to identify any of the signatures.

Chairman.] The Committee will consider the question.

The Committee-room was cleared.

PETITIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COAL AND WINE DUES.

MR. THOMAS CARRELL, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1156. Chairman.] Where do you reside?—21, Liverpool-street.

1157. Were you concerned in procuring signatures to these petitions?—I was.

1158. By whom were you employed?—By Mr. Roberts, of Hackney.

1159. Was your rate of remuneration agreed upon?—It was.

1160. How much was it?—I heard that Mr. Roberts had the working of these petitions, and I called in to see him. We talked the matter over, and he asked me what I thought would be a sufficient price, and I said 8 *s.* per hundred names; that was to include all my incidental expenses, to which he agreed; and at the same time he agreed to pay me a remuneration of 3 *l.* 3 *s.* a week.

1161. Was that in addition to the 8 *s.* per hundred signatures?—Yes.

1162. How long were you employed?—About six weeks, I think it was.

1163. How many signatures did you procure, do you say?—I think about 26,000.

1164. To whom did you return the sheets?—To Mr. Roberts.

1165. You engaged others to help you, did you not?—Yes.

1166. Could you give the Committee their names?—I think the Committee had a list of the names handed in yesterday; I have not them with me, but I could furnish the Committee with a list of the names.

1167. Did you examine the signatures yourself?—I did.

1168. Did you observe anything unusual in them?—No, except that in one instance I dismissed one man; he brought me one sheet in and I thought it had a very funny appearance. I paid him, and tore the petition up before him, and sent him away.

10th May 1887.]

MR. CARRELL.

[Continued.]

1169. What petition was that?—It was one of the petitions; I had an idea that he had done what he ought not to have done, so I simply tore it up.

1170. Why did you tear it up?—Because there were several names in it plainly written by the same hand, and it struck me at once that he had been putting down the names.

1171. Mr. *Louthier*.] Did he own that he had done it?—Yes, he did.

1172. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Did you pay him?—Yes, I paid him.

1173. Mr. *Wiggin*.] Do you know that man?—I do not know where to find him now. The man's name was Davies. I dare say I should be able to find him.

1174. Mr. *Louthier*.] What is your mode of proceeding to get signatures. You merely hand these sheets to these sub-agents, do you?—Yes; but then they are chiefly men that I know something about; most of these men were sent to me by people that I know in business.

1175. Did you know Davies?—No, I had not seen him before but he was brought to me by a man named Hihberd. He was out for me one day, and when he brought in the petition I was dissatisfied with it, and dismissed him, and I did not think anything more about it.

1176. Did you tell him to get the signatures of ratepayers, householders, and people who were of age?—I went as far as this; I told him that I thought every working man was entitled to sign the petition, supposing he was a householder, or even if he was in apartments.

1177. And women's signatures, were they taken?—No, although there was a doubt about that. I had one or two of my men who asked me whether women who were householders might sign, and I told them no, they had better not; but whether they ought or ought not, I did not know.

1178. Did you put the sheets together, or how did you manage it?—I usually gave a man four or eight sheets of paper, with a written heading on the top of one, and I put a paper fastener through them; then besides that I let him have two or three printed forms in addition to the written heading at the top; he usually had two or three of those printed forms at the bottom, and two or three of the small ones.

1179. Have you signed any of those petitions yourself?—No, I have not.

1180. You never have?—I have signed one.

1181. You signed one to start it, the top signature?—I think it was the top signature, that is the only one that I signed at all. It was the front sheet.

1182. And you always look at those sheets when they come into you yourself?—Yes; I have had something to do with petitions before, and as each man brought them in, I would examine them at the window of my office. In some instances I questioned the man if I found there was a mark to any name, and the explanation of that generally was that the man was not able to write, but put the mark to it and some one had witnessed it. In one instance there was not a witness, and I told the man that I must have one in future; that the signature ought to be witnessed; but with the exception of using my best ability to know that they were genuine, I did not verify any of them; I was not asked to do so.

1183. And you never have done so?—No, I have not.

1184. Then, when you got these petitions, you forwarded them to somebody, did you not?—I handed them to Mr. Roberts.

1185. Mr. *Tellemache*.] Have you any idea what petitions came through your hands?—No, I have not now.

1186. Could you give the Committee any list of them; have you no record of them?—None at all; not in any way.

1187. Not where the headings purported to be from ratepayers in such-and-such a district; could you give the Committee no idea?—I had no district; I was supposed to do the City, but I found some of the men went a little outside that; but still, I think, my petitions were chiefly signed by people in the City of London, Fenchurch, and that part.

1188. *Chairman*.]

10th May 1887.]

Mr. CARRELL.

[Continued.]

1188. *Chairman.*] Had you anything to do with the petition in which the names of the race-horses appear?—I was not aware of it.

1189. *Viscount Lynton.*] Were any of the people whom you employed responsible, as you believe, for the petitions that are called in question; had you any of your agents in connection with the particular petitions in respect to which we are now prosecuting this inquiry?—I believe not. I have heard a great deal about this matter, but I am still under the impression that all my men brought me in *bona fide* signatures; I can bring in every man I employed, and every man is willing upon his oath to say that they are *bona fide*; I have seen several of them; and, as for myself, I have no doubt about it.

1190. *Mr. Dalrymple.*] I suppose you would say that the thing chiefly kept in view is to get a number of signatures?—This was a very popular matter somehow; I do not know, I am sure, why it was; but there seemed to be great favour for the continuance of the dues, and a man was easily able to obtain 100 signatures a day. But that would be done in this way; a man who was known would send his petition through a firm like Waterlows, where there are from 1,200 to 1,300 people employed, and he would get out of that number 200 or 250 signatures. Then I know a man who went through the Great Eastern Railway Terminus where he obtained the number of 80 signatures in one or two hours.

1191. A petition so signed would hardly be confined to the ratepayers of London?—I take it that the different clerks and persons employed at the Great Eastern Railway would be all householders.

1192. The signatures would not include mere travellers?—No; these are men who signed and put down their private addresses; but they were employed there.

1193. Were your sub-agents paid by time or by the number of signatures obtained?—They were paid by the number of signatures.

1194. Was there any time fixed within which the sheets were to be returned?—Not at all. I pay different prices, and some men have better pay than others do; some men that I only paid 4 s. a hundred to brought me in about the same number as those I paid 10 s. a hundred to.

1195. You will understand that I am not throwing doubt upon your procedure, but am only asking for information. I would like to ask you what means you have of testing the authenticity of the signatures?—The only means I had, or at all events the only means I used, was to examine every sheet that was brought in, and if there was any semblance of copying, or if I thought any man had been writing names, I should tell the man of it.

1196. Is the manner in which the petition is carried about always known to you?—No.

1197. Then what possible means have you of verifying the petitions?—In this instance I could not do it, unfortunately; but I have known petitions in which I could have verified every name; in this case, however, I could not do it.

1198. You only say that these men are perfectly willing to be examined?—If they have deceived me I have no means of doing anything to them, but the Committee have probably the means of summoning them here to give evidence. I have no reason to believe that they have deceived me.

1199. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] You say you have collected about 26,000 signatures?—Yes, I have.

1200. And you were responsible to your immediate employer, Mr. Carlton Roberts, for the genuineness of those petitions?—Yes.

1201. Supposing you were shown a large batch of petitions, I understand you to say that you would not be able to tell the Committee, with regard to a single sheet of those petitions, whether it passed through your hands or not?—I really do not believe I would know; I might know some of the front sheets, because I took particular notice of the names on some of them.

1202. Am I right in saying that, for aught you can tell, these 26,000 signatures may all be forgeries together?—They may, but I should very much doubt it. I am not able to feel that myself at all. I do not see how it is possible that they could be forgeries.

10th May 1887.]

Mr. CARRELL.

[Continued.]

1203. Are you aware that, with regard to one petition, it has been confessed to the Committee that it is an entire forgery from beginning to end?—Yes, I have heard that.

1204. Could you give any guarantee to the Committee that the other petitions; for example, those which passed through your hands, are not the same?—No; that is to say, I have not sent to find out whether those people absolutely signed or not, but in my own mind I believe them to be genuine. I have seen a number of my own men since, and I have talked to them, and they are perfectly prepared to take their oath and say that every signature they have brought me in is *bona fide*.

1205. What I want to bring you to is this; you have said, quite rightly, that you were responsible to Mr. Carlton Roberts for the genuineness of these signatures?—I suppose I was; there was nothing said about the responsibility at all; there was nothing thought about the matter; it did not enter my mind.

1206. You did not understand that you were paid for getting bad signatures?—Certainly not; I certainly thought I was paying my men for getting good signatures.

1207. Were not you responsible for getting a good and genuine article?—Certainly I was, and I thought I was doing so.

1208. If you had been able to identify the sheets which you got in, if any of them were bad, you would be in a position to trace the source of it, would you not?—Yes, I should think I would; at least, I should think the men employed would be able to identify their own sheets; I should imagine that.

1209. But you are not able to identify them as having passed through your hands?—No, I should not be, because I had them brought in every morning; and after I had examined them and passed those that I thought were perfectly right, within ten minutes they were out of my possession; there was no mark put upon them, or anything of the kind. If it should happen that I had to do a similar thing, I certainly should take the precaution to mark every sheet that I had to do with; but it was not done in this instance.

1210. *Chairman.*] With regard to these men of yours, whom you simply employed in getting up signatures and paid, were you allowed anything more for them, or did that come out of what was agreed by Mr. Roberts?—It did.

1211. You were allowed a certain sum by Mr. Roberts?—Yes.

1212. Out of that sum you paid these men?—Yes, I did.

1213. Did you get anything more from Mr. Roberts?—No.

1214. Did you get nothing more than what was stipulated?—Nothing more than that at all. I think it is 104*l.* 19*s.* 9*d.* that I have received from Mr. Roberts for the signatures, and six times three guineas.

1215. That included all your remuneration?—Yes.

1216. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] Is it not, in your opinion, a great temptation to put this possibility of earning money, by procuring signatures at so much per hundred, into the hands of poor men, with no one to test the possibility of their being otherwise than genuine signatures which they bring in?—It appears to me that the only way of testing the genuineness of the signatures is to send the petition round afterwards to find out whether the people had signed it or not.

1217. Taking, say, two signatures out of a hundred, and then testing them?—I think that would be a very beneficial thing to do.

1218. Did it never strike you, being paid three guineas a week, that it was your duty to take some little means of testing those signatures?—No; because I placed implicit confidence in my men. I did not in the least apprehend that they were doing me or getting money from me by fraud.

1219. What sort of employment do those men have at other times?—You would find that some of those men were tradesmen who were doing badly, and who were glad to add a little to their income. Some would be clerks out of employ.

1220. That is not a very good class of man to put to this test of so much per hundred signatures; men out of employment, you would imagine, might not be very honest men when so tempted?—It is the class of men that you have to deal with

10th May 1887.]

Mr. CARRELL.

[Continued.]

with in these matters. I think the great bulk of the men that used to be engaged in legislation work were men out of work, or poor tradesmen who could take the things up for you.

1221. You did not inquire into their character?—No; I had several people sent to me by people that I did know; a firm in Thames-street sent me three or four. Messrs. White & Son, 217, Upper Thames-street, they are printers (I do not know the names of the men at the moment), they sent me a letter saying that if I could find employment for those men they would be obliged to me.

1222. Mr. Mulholland.] I should like to know why you give 10s. a hundred for some signatures, and 4s. a hundred for others?—That happened to be a man who thought he ought to have more money, and I, perhaps stupidly, but to give him a turn, gave him 10s. I think it was from about 170 to 180 that he did.

1223. It made no difference to the amount of work that he did?—No. I found one man, to whom I paid 4s. a hundred, brought me in about 75 signatures a day, and those that I paid 7s. a day to, would bring me in about 75 to 80 a day.

MR. CHARLES BOARD, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1224. Chairman.] WHAT ARE YOU?—I am a Commercial Traveller and Collector.

1225. Were you employed with regard to these petitions in getting signatures?—Yes, I was.

1226. By whom?—By Mr. Carlton Roberts.

1227. What were you to be paid?—£. 3 a week as a salary, and to produce signatures at the price of 8s. a hundred.

1228. Were you employed directly by Mr. Carlton Roberts?—Yes, I was employed directly by Mr. Carlton Roberts; the 8s. was to include all expenses and disbursements of every description.

1229. For how long were you employed?—I believe for about from seven to eight weeks.

1230. Can you give the Committee the names of any men who acted under you as sub-agents?—I can give you the entire list of the names of men who acted as canvassers for me.

1231. Who actually collected the signatures?—Yes.

1232. Does Bidmesd's name appear upon the list?—No, I had nothing to do with Mr. Bidmesd. I was engaged in the South of London.

1233. Will you read the names?—(The list was handed in).

1234. Mr. Tollemache.] What part did you collect for?—My men, I think, were all living in the South of London; but they were at liberty to collect wherever they could get signatures; and in some instances I paid them their travelling expenses. Some of them came over to this part of London; at any rate, we placed no restriction as to where they should get signatures.

1235. At any rate, the petitions purported to contain the signatures of the rstepayers of particular districts?—Yes.

1236. The headings were filled up when you gave the headings to your men?—Yes.

1237. Could you recognise any of the petitions which came through your hands?—No, I should be sorry to say I could. Inasmuch as I supplied, I think, 26,000 signatures, I think it would be almost too much to expect that I should be able to recognise any particular sheet.

1238. Mr. Louthier.] Did you not see the sheets when they were ready to be sent off?—I did.

1239. Would you not recognise a petition if you saw the heading of it, which you filled up or sent out?—I could endeavour to do so; but I should be sorry to say that I could.

1240. Where did your men go?—They principally came from the South of London.

10th May 1887.]

Mr. BOARD.

[Continued.]

1241. Mr. *Tollemacke*.] What was the heading of your petitions?—The heading was simply a printed form, one of which was given to the canvasser as he went out in the morning, and when he brought the sheets back I examined them as closely as I could.

1242. Mr. *Lawther*.] Could you ascertain where the canvassers had been?—I could see that by the addresses.

1243. Then it is possible that two men might go to the same place one day after the other?—It was part of the direction given to the canvassers that a ratepayer was not to sign twice; if he had signed before he was not to sign again.

1244. But did the canvassers always ask them?—I do not know that. My instruction to them was that no person was to sign twice.

1245. But they would not know whether a man had signed or had been asked to sign before?—But I take it that the party would have said so, would he not?

1246. Was it a house-to-house canvass?—Not exclusively; I did not consider that I was restricted to a house-to-house canvass. I know that two of my men went down to Woolwich Arsenal, and they had a table outside, and collected a lot of signatures from the men working there; and then again some of my men went into the gasworks; not with the knowledge of the gasworks authorities, I might say, but they got into the gasworks, and they obtained a lot of the signatures in that way. It would be no use making a house-to-house canvass in the middle of the day, as the people would be all away practically.

1247. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Were you acquainted with the canvassers?—Yes, every one of them. I have until recently, and for 10 or 12 years, been a tradesman in south London, and I have peculiar facilities for knowing a lot of men that want employment; and I am confident that the men I employed were men who would not condescend to a forgery.

1248. But when it is obvious that a certain number of petitions have been forged, and when every man who has employed others says that he is quite certain that none of his men would forge signatures, some of those men must be mistaken; would you be able to furnish any particulars of your men who would be at all likely to get signatures in an irregular manner?—I cannot. I heard of the petition with the race-horses' names attached, but I should look upon that as a joke. I should assume that the petition had been left at the bar of a public-house, and that the names had been attached to it by way of a joke.

1249. But when there are so many as 29 which have been questioned, it becomes a serious matter?—I can only speak with confidence as to my own men.

1250. What were your men?—One of my canvassers was the secretary of the Primrose League over at Brockley. Another gentleman has been a stockbroker, and is at present living upon his wife's income of 5*l.* a week, and would naturally like to have another 30*s.* a week added to it. Another was a carpenter, and knows a lot of men whose signatures he would be able to get; they were such men as those.

1251. *Chairman*.] Are you in business for yourself?—I am not in business for myself, I am travelling for a firm.

1252. But you are still in employment?—Yes; and I am also in the habit of assisting Mr. Carlton Roberts in any political work; he is proprietor of a newspaper, and I work for him as collector and canvasser sometimes.

1253. Mr. *Lawther*.] Did you look at those sheets yourself when they came back?—Yes, I did, personally.

1254. And you did not find anything unusual in them?—No, nothing at all, or I should have rejected them. I remember one man bringing me in a petition signed nearly all in the same handwriting, and he explained that by saying that he took the petition to a factory, and that the foreman had written all the men's names down with the men's consent; and I rejected that and told him to take the petition back and get the men's own signatures.

1255. You

10th May 1887.]

Mr. BOARD.

[Continued.]

1255. You do not recollect the number, perhaps; was it a large number?—It was about 40 names, I should say; it was a sheet nearly covered.

1256. Viscount *Lymington*.] When Mr. Carlton Roberts employed you as his sub-agent, what language did he make use of; what did he say to you?—He was very impressive in his instructions that the signatures were to be *bond fide* in every case. I was to be in the first place very careful in the selection of my men, and he knew, I may say,—

1257. That does not answer the question; what did Mr. Carlton Roberts say to you?—That every signature was to be *bond fide*, and that I was to be particular in giving the canvassers instructions to that effect.

1258. You have said that you secured about 26,000 signatures?—About 26,000 in round numbers.

1259. You have said you examined them closely?—Yes.

1260. What do you mean by that?—Each man would bring in about 100 to 150; not more than 150 a day; and as he would hand in his two or three sheets I would look at them closely, and being a pretty good judge of handwriting I should have thought I would have been able to detect anything like a forgery, of any flagrant character at any rate.

1261. You mean, you would be able to detect if one of your men had written several signatures?—Yes, quite so.

1262. You could not have detected whether they had been signed by people under age, or by women and children?—No, I could not have pretended to do that.

1263. Or by people who are not ratepayers?—No.

1264. And you did not attempt to consider seriously whether they had been signed by people who were not ratepayers?—No. I did not consider that to be within my province.

1265. What you did consider to be within your province was to collect a large number of names in regard to which you were satisfied that they were not written by one or two people, but that they were genuine signatures; but you did not care whether they were ratepayers or not?—No.

1266. You did not care about that?—No.

1267. You did not give any instructions to the people who acted for you to endeavour to get the signatures only of ratepayers?—I did not know that it was particularly necessary that they should be ratepayers, as long as they were adults, upon this particular question of the coal and wine dues. I did not consider it was necessary that they should be ratepayers, because it was a question that would affect them as lodgers as well.

1268. Did you take any steps to ascertain at all; did you give any injunctions to the people you employed that they were to satisfy themselves that the signatures were taken from people who might reasonably be supposed to be residents?—I did.

1269. The Committee heard of one petition being collected at a railway station; do you know whether any of your petitions were collected in that way?—No; I had not any such.

1270. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] If no particular districts are assigned to which petitions are to be taken, I suppose there is no reason why people should not have signed more petitions than one, except their own discretion?—Quite so; they would have understood it to be wrong, I presume.

1271. There would be no security against their signing many times over?—Quite so.

1272. I observed you to say that it was very unlikely that you yourself would check the sheets as they came in; but what other check than your's was there upon them?—No other before they left my hands.

1273. And when they left your hands there was still less probability that they would be checked in the future, because when they reached Mr. Carlton Roberts there was still less chance of his inspecting them; are your sub-agents paid by time or by the number of signatures they obtain?—By the number of signatures they obtain.

1274. I quite understand that you know your sub-agents and trust them; but

o.73.

K

10th May 1887.]

Mr. BOARD.

[Continued.]

but if their sole object was to get the largest number of signatures possible, you would consider that there was great room for extra signing?—Having taken great care in the selection of my men in the first place, I would feel assured that they would not be in any way capable of forgery.

1275. I was not putting it so much on the ground of forgery as that, by the districts being taken without any particular selection, the petitions might be signed by people who had already signed?—That would be possible; but take it for granted that gentlemen would not sign twice.

1276. Your trust in your sub-agents is one thing, that I can quite understand, but I think you can see that something more than that is implied; your trust is extended to those who signed?—Yes, I admit that I do not see a way of avoiding that.

1277. It is not for me to point out how it might be done; but do not you think that the fact that no particular district is assigned to your sub-agents is a reason why there might be great risk of persons signing many times over. Am I not right in understanding you that a man might be given a petition to take in south London, and would be at liberty to bring it over to Westminster?—Yes; as a rule a man would say to me, and very often they have said, "I went down such and such a neighbourhood and found there had been someone there," and he would immediately, finding there had been someone there before him, abandon that neighbourhood.

1278. Mr. Donald Crawford.] You say you assisted Mr. Carlton Roberts; did you personally forward any petitions to the Houses of Parliament?—No; I forwarded all my petitions to Mr. Carlton Roberts.

1279. You had nothing further to do with them after that?—No, I had not.

1280. Mr. Lowther.] Is this your list (*exhibiting a list to the Witness*)?—Yes.

1281. Would any of those persons be available if we wanted to see them?—Yes, any or all of them.

Mr. WILLIAM HENRY DE HORNE, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1282. Chairman.] Where do you live?—My business address is 15, Clerkewell-green.

1283. What are you?—I am secretary to the Central Finsbury Conservative Association.

1284. What else are you?—I am nothing else.

1285. Are you a paid secretary?—I am.

1286. Were you employed in the matter of these petitions?—Mr. Carlton Roberts wrote me a letter some five months ago, I think it is, and asked me to call upon him, saying there was a matter of business he thought he could put in my way if I would go and see him; and I went to see him. He mentioned these petitions, and said that if I could get him any signatures he would be very glad. I told him I would do what I could; that I had not much spare time myself, but that I would do what I could to get signatures for him; I did not take any notice of it till about two or three months afterwards, when I put on what men I knew to do the work.

1287. What pay were you to receive for doing the work?—Mr. Carlton Roberts said to me, for the expenses that might be incurred in getting the signatures he would give me 10 s. a hundred.

1288. Anything per week besides?—No.

1289. That you were to have so much per week, and for getting these signatures 10 s. a hundred?—

1290. Did you get the signatures yourself?—I did not. I never got a single signature.

1291. Then you employed others?—Yes; I did employ others.

1292. Mr. Lowther.] Whom did you employ?—I employed a collector in my own office, and three others besides, who had worked for me before; not for

10th May 1887.]

Mr. DE HORNE.

[Continued.]

for getting signatures to a petition, but registration business, and similar work.

1293. Will you give me their names?—Mr. Hurran; his address would be 10, Great Sutton-street; Mr. Wilsber, of 47, Cowley-road, Beixton; Mr. Kensit, of 31, Tunbridge-street, Euston-road; and Mr. Pattison, of 6, Gillespie-road, Highbury.

1294. Mr. *Tellemachs*.] Were those men to collect any particular district?—I instructed them to get the signatures out of the five wards in Central Finsbury.

1295. Would you suppose they did?—I could not swear that they adhered to my instructions, because there is no doubt they brought some from other parts. Mr. Kensit, who lives in the Euston-road, brought some from that district, because I saw them when they came in; there were only 978 signatures that passed through my hands altogether.

1296. Mr. *Lowther*.] Then you tacked them all together?—Some of them I tacked together, and handed them to Mr. Roberts in that way, but the others I handed to Mr. Roberts loose; but every man that I employed had either a written heading or a printed heading, and loose sheets.

1297. Though the sheets were different, they were all upon the same subject?—Yes; in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties.

1298. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] What price did you pay the collectors?—I paid the collectors different prices. I asked them when they came to undertake the work what price they would charge me. Mr. Wilsber said, he could not do them under 6 s. per hundred, and Mr. Kensit said, he could not do them under 5 s. a hundred; he asked me if I would give him an extra 15 s. for some expenses; he said he could get some signatures by having petitions at some coffee-houses, and if I would let him have the 15 s., he would deduct it when he brought me the signatures; for that 15 s. he did not bring me one signature.

1299. Then your remuneration was the difference between what you paid the collectors, and the 10 s. per hundred?—Yes; Mr. Carlton Roberts gave me altogether 5 £, and I gave in exchange for that 978 signatures.

1300. Mr. *Lowther*.] Did it ever seem to you, in looking through those signatures, that there was a strong family likeness between them?—No; Mr. Hurran, who is a collector in the office, went through the sheets with me as they came in, and as far as I could I examined them before I took them into Mr. Carlton Roberts, and I considered that they were genuine signatures. I saw a great many of the signatures of people in Central Finsbury whom I knew.

1301. You saw some of the signatures you knew?—Yes, I saw some of them on the sheets that I could swear to.

1302. Did you ever sign the petition yourself?—Yes, I signed one form of heading.

1303. Mr. *Tellemachs*.] Where would that be from; from the ratepayers of any district?—No, it was simply an engrossed heading, purporting to be a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues.

1304. But from what district; Westminster, or Finsbury, or what?—I cannot say which it was attached to, because I signed the petition in Mr. Carlton Roberts' office, and whatever petition he attached it to I do not know. He said, "Have you signed the petition," and I said "No;" and then he said, "You may as well give me your signature."

1305. And that may have been attached to a petition from Paddington or from the north of London; you may figure as a ratepayer of Paddington; you did not look to see what district it purported to come from?—No; I had no opportunity of seeing that, because the petition was not districted.

1306. Mr. *Lowther*.] You never put your name to any crosses?—No, certainly not.

10th May 1887.

Mr. CARLTON ROBERTS, called again; and further Examined.

1307. *Chairman.* I BELIEVE you wish to tender some documents?—I have the sheets I was asked yesterday to produce (*producing certain sheets of signatures*). These are the sheets I referred to yesterday as having had my attention called to them, and I then directed they should be put on one side.

1308. *Mr. Lushier.* As being written in one hand?—It struck me as being suspicious. The clerk who was doing up the petitions called my attention to all the crosses, and I said, "That is a doubtful sheet; I think that had better be left out." I mention this to bear out the point that some examination had been made of the sheets. I only wish to add, with regard to those sheets, that it would have been impossible for them to have been attached to a petition upon any other subject, such as a petition upon women's suffrage.

1309. Why would it have been impossible?—Simply because every sheet went through my hands, and I myself would have taken care that that could not have occurred.

Mr. JOHN LLOYD, called again; and further Examined.

1310. *Chairman.* We understand you wish to make some further addition to your evidence?—Yes. Yesterday a bundle of petitions was placed in my hands to identify, and I need hardly say, at a moment's notice, I could not do so. I hardly opened it, as you are aware. The list is here; and I have prepared a statement as regards each one, which I beg to hand in, and they will be able to be identified, with the exception of two, one of 24 signatures and the other of 127 signatures. Otherwise I have identified them all; that is to say, I could tell you that they passed either through my hands or not through my hands. The clerk handed in a list of 31 petitions, which he said had been objected to by Mr. Webster, which he thought required explanation, and the first we came to was the Bardwell Colliery, in the north of England, which I said I had nothing to do with. The next was from Bow, which I have traced; the third I cannot trace; it contains 24 signatures.

1311. *Mr. Tollemache.* Have you drawn up a summary showing that you can trace whatever number it is that went through your hands, and that the remainder that did not?—That is so. One large one was objected to; that was put in by Mr. Smith, which contained 1,200 names. Mr. Smith had the petition from us, and that was handed by Mr. Smith to Mr. Bradlaugh. Then there was another one which was sent from my house to Mr. Cordale, who sent the petition to Mr. Pickersgill, who presented it to the House. So that those which have been commented upon by your Committee have been to some extent thus explained. There is one marked Mr. Newnes, which I have not been able to trace; perhaps it is Major Banes, if so I shall be able to trace it; that was from West Ham. But I was unable to go yesterday at a moment's notice into all those details, which required inspection of books, and so on.

1312. You hand in these lists to the Committee Clerk now?—I do. (*The same were handed in.*)

1313. *Colonel Bridgeman.* That list gives the names of the men who collected the signatures?—Yes, with the exception of one or two unimportant cases which I have been unable to trace; they principally came through Mr. Wilson; the two larger ones came through Mr. Smith and Mr. Wilson.

1314. But that list does not give the names of the men who really collected the signatures, but of the men who sent them to you?—What we did was this: we sent to our different friends in London who took charge of the petitions. Those gentlemen were volunteers. Mr. Cordale was paid nothing for that. Mr. Smith, I think, had £1. for his expenses. They took charge, they had the responsibility, and caused the petitions to be presented themselves; and they are persons who would be responsible, and who could be called upon at a moment's notice.

10th May 1887.

Mr. WILLIAM STEWART, called in, sworn, and Examined.

1315. *Chairman.*] WHERE do you live?—At Manor Park, Essex.
 1316. What are you?—A photographer.
 1317. Were you employed to get up signatures to these petitions?—I was.
 1318. At what remuneration?—My remuneration was to be 5 l. for my services, but I was to employ canvassers to get the signatures.
 1319. You were not to get the signatures yourself, but to employ canvassers?—I myself was to collect them as far as I could.
 1320. Did you yourself canvass for signatures?—I did.
 1321. *Viscount Lynton.*] You were given 5 l., and you were told to do what you could for that?—The 5 l. was to get signatures, and I was to get as many as I could for that. I supplied altogether about 5,000 signatures.
 1322. What were you to pay the canvassers?—I paid the canvassers at the rate of 5 s. per 100 signatures.
 1323. *Mr. Wigg.*] You were to be paid 5 l., and to get 5 s. per 100 signatures besides?—Yes, I was to get 5 l. for my services besides. I am to get it. I have not yet got it.
 1324. *Mr. Louth.*] Who employed you?—Mr. Carlton Roberts.
 1325. Did he engage you himself, or did he send somebody else to do it?—I was employed by him direct. I have been employed by him upon several occasions.
 1326. Did you get any signatures yourself?—Yes. I kept a petition lying in my shop, and I also went out to get signatures by canvassing.
 1327. *Chairman.*] Could you speak to all the signatures you got yourself?—Yes; all the signatures I got myself were genuine.
 1328. *Mr. Louth.*] Did you know all the people who signed?—I knew the signatures were genuine.
 1329. But how did you know they were genuine?—I went from house to house, and the people signed and put their addresses. I canvassed the City, Moorgate-street, Coleman-street, and one or two streets about Milk-street, Cheapside.
 1330. When your lists were returned from your sub-agents, did you examine them?—Yes.
 1331. Did you find anything that should not have been there?—I found one or two names that should not have been there.
 1332. What were they?—I found the name of Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. A. J. Balfour, whose address was given as Phoenix Park, and then there was another sheet that was filled up with filthy matter. The canvasser who brought that in to me had got that filthy sheet from a public-house in Stratford, where it had been filled up.
 1333. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] Did you pay the canvasser for getting that filthy sheet; the one with Mr. Gladstone's name on?—No, I did not.
 1334. *Mr. Louth.*] Did he explain to you how Mr. Gladstone's name happened to be upon it?—No, he could not do that; but he told me who it was got the signatures for him. I told him it was no good, because I could not take it.

Thursday, 12th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Mr. William Lowther.
Viscount Lymington.
Mr. McLagan.
Mr. Mulholland.

THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM LOWTHER, IN THE CHAIR.

ON THE KING'S CROSS PETITION,
PRESENTED BY MR. R. G. WEBSTER, ON THE 6TH MAY 1887,
AGAINST THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COAL AND WINE DUTIES.

MR. JOHN GEORGE GRELLIER, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1335. *Chairman.*] WHAT is your business?—I am a Stationer and Printer.

1336. Where do you live?—At 211, Gray's Inn-road.

1337. Will you look at that petition (*handing the petition to the Witness*); is that your address?—It is.

1338. And your name?—And my name.

1339. And your signature?—No.

1340. You did not sign that?—No; those are my sons' signatures.

1341. *Viscount Lymington.*] What age are your sons?—One is 16 and the other 18.

1342. *Chairman.*] Is J. G. Grellier on that?—No, it is not.

1343. The name signed is that of one of your sons?—Yes, that is one of my sons.

1344. And what are your sons' names?—They are Albert Grellier and Charles Grellier.

1345. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] Do you recognise their handwriting?—Yes, it is their handwriting; one is a compositor and the other is a vellum binder; they are both apprentices.

1346. They are not here, are they?—No, they are printers; I represent them. I thought that would answer the purpose.

1347. *Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.*] Is this the first time you ever heard of the petition?—Yes.

1348. That is to say, you were not aware that it was being taken round for signatures, were you?—Yes, I was aware that it was.

1349. Were you aware that this petition was being taken round for signatures?—I might say this, I cannot well answer your question exactly in that way. The petition was placed outside my shop upon a table.

1350. Do you know who took it there?—A Mr. Middleton.

1351. What is Mr. Middleton?—I believe he is an optician.

1352. *Chairman.*] He was in charge of the petition, was he?—Yes, he was in charge of it.

1353. Mr.

12th May 1887.]

Mr. GRELLIER.

[Continued.]

1353. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] Did you see this petition yourself?—Yes, I did.

1354. Will you just tell the Committee what you saw?—I lent Mr. Middleton a table to put it on, and in the evening, or rather just before we closed, it was brought in, and in the morning they came and fetched it and put it outside; that is really all I know about it.

1355. Was Mr. Middleton in charge of the petition?—Not all day; there was somebody else. I do not know whether Mr. Middleton employed him or not. I am not able to answer that question.

1356. Did he invite persons to sign the petition?—No, he did not. It was upon the table, he sat upon a chair, and people came up and signed it.

1357. Was there a placard attached to the petition?—Yes, there was a little handbill upon the table. The petition was in the centre, and pens and ink on one side, and a little handbill, about 12 inches square, with it.

1358. And those handbills described the object of the petition?—Yes.

1359. Were you asked to sign the petition yourself?—I was not asked to do so, and I did not do so.

1360. If you had been asked to sign the petition, should you have signed it?—No, I should not.

1361. Did your boys tell you they had signed the petition?—Yes, they did.

1362. Viscount *Lymington*.] And you did not see any objection to it?—No, I did not. Each of them is in a workshop; one of them is a printer and the other is a binder, and their shops are full of workmen; and having heard of the petition they signed it. They read the newspapers, and they are pretty well acquainted with matters, and having heard of it they signed the petition.

1363. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Then you took a different view of the subject from your sons?—Yes, I did myself personally.

1364. *Chairman*.] There was a heading to the petition, was there not?—Yes.

1365. Do you recollect what the heading was?—I do not.

1366. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] You said, in reply to me just now, that upon this table there was a placard or writing describing the object of the petition?—Yes.

1367. Do you remember what the words were which were written upon that paper?—I do not. I really did not read them.

1368. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] May I ask, did you sign any petition at all taking the other view?—I did not. I have never been asked to do so.

1369. Not upon the other side of the question?—Not upon either side.

CHARLES MARTIN, being called, did not appear.

W. SADLER, being called, did not appear.

Mr. WILLIAM HENRY COOMBS, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1370. *Chairman*.] What is your occupation?—I am a Messenger to the House of Commons. Order Messenger.

1371. Do you summon witnesses?—Yes.

1372. Did you summon a man of the name of Sadler?—Yes, I served the summons personally upon him.

1373. Do you recollect what is his christian name?—I do not recollect exactly. I think it is William, but I found him at the residence given to me as his address, in Cromer-street.

1374. Did he decline to come; did he say he would not come?—No, he intimated that he would come; he told me that he had signed the petition.

1375. But he did not see the petition when you went to him?—No.

1376. Did you summon Martin too?—I served the summons upon his wife; he was not at home, but she told me that he had signed a petition.

12th May 1887.]

Mr. COOMBS.

[Continued.]

1377. She did not tell you the object of the petition?—It was respecting the coal and wine duties.

1378. But she did not say upon which side?—I did not ask her.

1379. Were there some others that you summoned?—With regard to "J. Smith," I found there was no such person as J. Smith at the address given me.

1380. What was the address?—15, Ossulton-street, Somers Town; I found there was a Mrs. Smith.

1381. You went there and you did not find him?—I found there was a Mrs. Smith living in one of the rooms of the house; her husband had been separated from her two or three years. She knew nothing of him; but his initial was not J., his name was Charles Smith. I asked if she had signed the petitions and she said no, she had not. The next, J. Jones, of 12, Cromer-street, was not known.

1382. There is a man appearing in the petition as J. Jane; you did not ask for a person of the name of Jane?—No, I did not, but there is only one family in the house. I ascertained that, and the name is Smith.

1383. Viscount *Lymington*.] Would you kindly state to me the names of the people you went to see; we have eight signatures which were called in question?—Five of those I could not find. Smith, Jones, Huntly, of 82, Judd-street. W. Baum, of Harrison-street, was not known, but I ascertained that a man of the name of Baum had lived in the district, but he had removed, and no one could tell me where he had gone to.

1384. A man named Baum had lived in the district?—He had lived in Cromer-street; the man Sadler told me that. I asked him if he knew a man named Baum, and he said he knew Baum.

1385. W. Baum?—Yes, W. Baum, living very near to himself; he had lived there and had recently removed, and he (Sadler) did not know where he had gone to.

1386. It was quite possible for him to sign the petition?—Yes, it was quite possible for him to sign it. I believe many of the names were signed at the corner of the street.

1387. Mr. *Mulholland*.] What do you say about Huntly?—Huntly I could not find.

1388. Viscount *Lymington*.] Was there any man of that description whom you could find, who had lived there?—No, I could find nothing of Huntly.

1389. But there is such a number as 82, Judd-street?—There is such a number. I went to 82, Judd-street, but there was no person of the name of Huntly living there, nor had there been.

1390. What is Judd-street; is it a lodging-house?—It is a business street, principally.

1391. But this particular number, 82?—82, Judd-street is a shop.

1392. Are the people in the habit of taking in lodgers in this shop?—They have people living over the shop, but there was no one of that name living there at the time.

1393. But perhaps they do not know always the people that live there. Are they in the habit of letting rooms for a night?—No, I should think not; it would be people taking rooms permanently, I should judge, from the appearance of the house.

1394. You did not inquire whether they were in the habit of letting rooms for the night, as they do in some places?—I did not.

1395. There are, as you know, many houses in that part of London where they take in lodgers for a night?—Yes, there are; but still this was not a house that would do that, judging from the appearance of it.

1396. But that is only conjecture upon your part?—Yes, it is only conjecture. Then the next is L. Howard, of 13, Compton-road, W.C. I can find no "Compton-road" in the W.C. district; there is a "Compton-street," which I went to, but the name of Howard was not known there. The only "Compton-road" I could find anywhere in the directory is in the north district, and I went there, but the name is not known.

1397. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] How many of the signatures were acknowledged out of

12th May 1887.]

Mr. COOMBS.

[Continued.]

of the eight that were alleged to be not genuine?—I knew nothing about which were alleged to be genuine or not.

1398. Taylor is the first?—He is outside. Arnot is outside, and Church is outside; those are men who canvassed.

1399. When you mentioned at the outset of your examination that such-and-such a man admitted having signed, which of them was that?—Martin's wife admitted that her husband had signed, and Sadler admitted having signed himself.

1400. Are those two included in the eight?—In the eight that I took out.

1401. How many out of the eight you attempted to find admitted having signed?—Martin's wife admitted for her husband, and Sadler admitted for himself.

1402. Was there any other admitted having signed?—Busby. I did not see Busby, but I saw his brother-in-law, and he said he had signed it, he knew, but he had given a wrong address; he had given Wellington-square, which is the brother-in-law's address, but Busby himself does not live there.

1403. He was quite aware of the petition you were inquiring about?—Yes, he was.

1404. Colonel Bridgeman.] I should like to know how many out of the eight you found?—There appear to have been nine. I found Sadler, Busby, Grellier, and Martin. The others I did not find.

1405. The others you did not find?—I found four out of the nine.

1406. Mr. Cavendish Bentick.] And five you did not find?—Five I did not find.

1407. Did you go to the residences of those five, or their alleged residences?—I did.

1408. And they were not known there?—They were not.

PETITIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COAL AND WINE DUES.

Mr. SAMUEL HENRY TAYLOR, called in, sworn; and Examined.

1409. Chairman.] What are you?—I am a Clerk and Traveller.

1410. Where do you live?—I live at Brockley.

1411. Have you been at all employed in matters connected with petitions?—Yes; I have been employed for a short time as canvasser, collecting signatures for a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties.

1412. Who employed you?—A Mr. Board, at Brockley.

1413. Mr. Cavendish Bentick.] Where is Brockley?—It is in the south-eastern district, just beyond New Cross.

1414. Chairman.] What was your manner of proceeding; how did you collect the signatures?—By calling at each house. I was supplied with ruled forms and a printed heading.

1415. Do you mean a printed heading of the petition?—A printed heading of the petition, showing what the petition was for, which I attached to the sheet, and then called at the dwelling-houses of people in the neighbourhood where I was living, in New Cross.

1416. Had you any instructions as to who were to sign?—Yes; they were to be all *bona fide* signatures.

1417. Of men and women?—Adults. I did not understand exactly about their being householders only, but adults.

1418. Were you paid so much a head?—I was paid 5 s. a hundred signatures.

1419. Did you collect a great many signatures?—I collected between 150 and 200 only.

1420. Did you collect them upon separate sheets?—Yes; I collected them upon separate sheets; each sheet was filled in, and then I took it to Mr. Board,

0.73.

L

with

12th May 1887.]

Mr. TAYLOR.

[Continued.]

with the heading attached, and got another new sheet, and another printed form for the top. I took them in as I got them filled up.

1421. Did you ever meet with people who could not write?—I think one or two; but I could not be sure.

1422. Did they sign?—They put their mark, and I had a witness to sign the name.

1423. You did not witness the signature yourself?—I might have done it as well, and got someone else to write the name. I knew it was the proper form. I have been in the army, and it is the same way as the army signatures are made; a cross and a witness or two.

1424. Where did you collect the signatures?—I collected some in New Cross, Brockley, Deptford, and Lewisham.

1425. Did you find people volunteer to sign?—Some were very anxious. Some I had to speak to for a few minutes, and explain to them what it was about. I explained what would be the result if the dues were done away with, and they signed very readily. Some looked at the heading, and signed without a word. Some would not sign at all, but very few that I came across. I only got a few signatures altogether; but there were very few that I found that would not sign.

1426. And did they put their addresses?—Yes.

1427. Did you ever take the trouble to verify them to see that they were correct?—No; I went to the shops. I knew the neighbourhood very well. I have been in the neighbourhood a long time.

1428. Did you look at each signature after it was written?—I could not say that I looked particularly at every signature. I know that the party who is keeping the shop signed it, but I could not say that each man put his own individual name in every case.

1429. But you never noticed in the petitions that they had signed names that ought not to be there?—No.

1430. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.] How many signatures did you say you got; was it under 200?—The number was under 200.

1431. To the best of your knowledge and belief those signatures were all genuine signatures?—To the best of my knowledge and belief they were all genuine signatures.

1432. Colonel Bridgeman.] Was yours a house-to-house canvass?—It was.

1433. Could you say what proportion of the people refused to sign the petition?—Some would not be troubled with it.

1434. But how many took the other view?—I should say about one to every 10, or one to every 15.

1435. You found 15 of the people willing to sign for a continuance of the coal and wine dues for one against?—Yes; I got the first day from 15 to 20 signatures in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, and only one was against it, and that was a chemist in the Lewisham High-road.

1436. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.] Is it your opinion that without some machinery of this sort for obtaining signatures these signatures could not be obtained in your neighbourhood; do you think that if no one had been sent round the petition would have been signed?—I do not think they would have troubled about it.

1437. That is to say, in order to obtain signatures to a petition it is practically necessary that someone should be sent round with the petition?—That is my belief.

1438. Chairman.] How long were you employed?—I was only on for three or four days.

1439. And that is all your experience?—That is all my experience as far as collecting names goes.

1440. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.] What is Mr. Board?—I could not tell you. I know he goes to the City every morning and returns in the evening; he lives in the next street to me.

1441. Mr.

12th May 1887.]

MR. TAYLOR.

[Continued.]

1441. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] You say you took three or four days to get the signatures you had?—I went about three or four days. I was travelling to collect orders from firms in the district, and I took those signatures at the same time.

PETITION FROM EAST SAINT PANCRAS, PRESENTED BY
MR. R. G. WEBSTER ON THE 10TH MAY.

MR. OLIER MILES, called in, sworn, and Examined.

1442. *Chairman*.] You have written to the Committee to say that you have some important evidence to give them. What is your occupation, first of all?—I am Assistant Registration Agent to my brother, in the West St. Pancras Constituency.

1443. Is that for the registration of votes?—Yes, Parliamentary votes.

1444. Who is your brother?—Mr. Arthur Robert Miles.

1445. What is the important evidence which you say you have to give to the Committee?—I inquired into 39 names on a sheet of the petition.

1446. First of all, why did you inquire; were you employed by somebody?—It was at the instigation of Mr. Webster.

1447. You were engaged by Mr. Webster to inquire into what?—Into a sheet of petition.

1448. What petition was it?—It was a petition against the coal and wine dues.

1449. Where is that petition?—I believe it is in the House.

1450. Where does that petition come from?—From East St. Pancras.

1451. When was the petition presented?—I do not know exactly, but I think it was about a week ago.

The Witness was directed to withdraw.

The Committee having deliberated,—

The Witness was recalled.

1452. *Chairman*.] What is your object in coming here to-day?—It was to tell you the result of my inquiries.

1453. With regard to this petition?—Yes.

1454. What is the result of your inquiries?—I find that there are 10 signatures not known out of the 39 that I inquired into.

1455. How many signatures are there to that petition altogether?—Seventy-three. Out of the 39 I inquired into, 10 were not known, or did not live at the address stated; two are under age; two cases in which the wives were unable to identify their husbands' supposed signatures; one case in which the wife says it is a forgery of her husband's signature; two gentlemen did not sign their pretended signatures.

1456. Two forgeries, in fact?—Yes. Then there was one address at 225, Camden Town. I could not find that, of course, because that is a locality embracing a number of streets; there is no particular number, of course, to Camden Town.

1457. How do you know that the 10 are not known?—Because I inquired at the houses.

1458. You went round yourself to the houses where they were supposed to live?—Yes.

1459. And they did not know the names?—No, they did not know them; in fact the man did not live there at all.

1460. Have those been marked in this petition?—I do not know.

1461. You have not marked them yourself?—I have not.

1462. When did you see this petition?—Last Friday.

1463. Was that before it was presented?—Yes.

1464. Who were the two men who did not sign the pretended signatures?—C. Shepherd, 6, Cornelius-place, and F. Lynch, 15, Ashby-street.

o.73.

L 2

1465. You

12th May 1887.]

Mr. MILES

[Continued.]

1465. You found them themselves, did you?—Yes.
1466. What are they; in what station of life?—I have not got what Lynch is, but Shepherd is a paperhanger.
1467. Do you know anything about John Wright?—Yes; he is not known at 12, Packington-street; but he is at the other address, 1, Chenies-place.
1468. The petition appears to have been signed by two Wrights?—Yes, with the same signature.
1469. Did you have an interview with him; did you see him?—No, I did not.
1470. What are the two under age; did you see them?—I saw one of them, C. Shepherd, 182, Seymour-street; he told me he was 19; and Rose Cooke, 15, Cumberland Market; I did not see her, but I was told by the landlady that she was a young girl of about 19.
1471. Do you know how this petition was signed; under what circumstances?—Yes; I think it was under some arches at Battlebridge-road, Camden Town. I suppose it would be the Caledonian-road.
1472. It was put there, was it?—Yes; a woman had it.
1473. Viscount Lyngington.] How many doubtful signatures are there, do you think, out of the 39?—There were 18 very doubtful.
1474. You have given the Committee the list; how many out of the 39 that you have examined, do you say in evidence, cannot be relied upon for different reasons?—Eighteen out of the 39; that is nearly 50 per cent.
1475. Chairman.] Where did you inquire into these 39 signatures?—I took them promiscuously; I had not time to inquire into the petition as a whole; I confined myself principally to St. Pancras; the other signatures are all over the place.
1476. Viscount Lyngington.] You have stated the result of the 18 to be as follows: 10 not known, two under age, and two doubtful signatures?—In two cases the wives were unable to identify the signatures.
1477. There are three forgeries altogether?—Yes.
1478. And one who has signed 225, Camden Town?—Yes.
1479. Chairman.] Have you a separate list of the 18?—Yes, I have.
1480. Will you hand it in?—I will.

The Witness handed in the following List.

NAME.	ADDRESS.	REMARKS.
J. Blake - - -	9, Camden-street - -	Is not known there.
George Henry Alderson -	86, Clarendon-street -	There is no such house.
Frederick Adams - - -	125, Bayham-street -	Is not known there.
J. Wright - - -	12, Packington-street -	Is not known there.
M. A. Jones - - -	105, Ossulston-street -	Is not known there.
F. Watkins - - -	6, Stebbin-street - -	Is not known there.
J. J. Ireson - - -	5, Chalton-street - -	Is not known there.
J. Harris - - -	60, King-street - - -	Is not known there.
Pierce F. Ryan Goulding	43, Mornington-road -	Does not live there.
G. Herbert - - -	3, Winchester-street -	Is an empty house.
C. Shepherd - - -	182, Seymour-street -	Is under age (19).
Rose Cook - - -	15, Cumberland Market	Is under age (19).
J. W. Burns - - -	2, Edinburgh Houses -	Wife does not think it is her husband's signature.
R. Selves - - -	48, Pancras-square - -	Wife unable to identify it as husband's signature.
A. Shepherd - - -	6, Cornelius-place - -	Name is W. Shepherd, who did not sign.
T. Lynch - - -	15, Ashby-street - - -	Did not sign.
F. J. Roberts - - -	39, Bassett-street - -	John Roberts is the name. Wife says signature is a forgery.

One address is 225, Camden Town.

1481. Mr.

12th May 1887.]

Mr. Miles.

[Continued.]

1481. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Do I understand that you did not pick out the 39 names for any particular reason?—Certainly not; I took them promiscuously. My reason for taking those principally was because they were in St. Pancras, and I confined myself to St. Pancras.

1482. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] Did you hear from those people whom you visited who had taken the petition to them?—No; the petition was signed in the street under some arches.

1483. It was not a house-to-house canvass?—No; the petition was set out on a table.

1484. You did not see the table?—I did not see it at all; but those people told me in several cases that that was the condition under which they signed it.

1485. Did they point out to you the spot in the street where the table had been placed?—No, but I am familiar with those arches. I walk past that way, and so I know where it is.

1486. I want to know whether the table was at any distance from the houses where these people would live?—Yes, from the main body of the houses; there might be a few detached houses near it.

1487. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] How long did it take you to go through those 39 names?—Nearly three days; two and a half days; they are some distance apart.

1488. The two under age had signed, I suppose?—Yes.

1489. *Chairman*.] Did you ask those people their ages?—No; I asked Shepherd; the other was volunteered.

1490. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] What were the ages of the minors?—The boy was 19.

1491. And what was the age of the other one?—She was a young girl of about 19.

1492. *Chairman*.] Of the 39 signatures examined, were they not those of persons supposed to be resident in the borough of St. Pancras, although not necessarily in East St. Pancras?—Yes.

1493. The remainder being supposed to be signatures of persons residing in various other parts of London?—Yes, that is quite right.

1494. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] How does Camden Town lie relatively to East St. Pancras?—I think Camden Town is nearly all in East St. Pancras.

1495. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] Do you happen to know of your own knowledge whether this table plan of signing petitions has been extensively adopted by the opponents of this measure?—I do not know that of my own knowledge, but I believe it has.

1496. And not the canvassing system?—No.

1497. Because there are two systems; there is the system of house-to-house canvass, carried on as has been described in this Committee, and there is also this plan or system of setting up tables in various places, and inviting signatures from passers-by?—Yes.

1498. You do not know of your own knowledge whether that table system has been adopted by the opponents of the Bill?—I could not say that of my own knowledge, but I believe it has.

12th May 1887.

PETITION FROM KING'S CROSS, PRESENTED BY
MR. R. G. WEBSTER ON THE 6TH MAY 1887,
AGAINST THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COAL AND WINE DUES.

Mr. THOMAS JOHN MIDDLETON, called in, sworn; and Examined.

1499. *Chairman.* | WHERE do you live?—At No. 23, Frederick-street, Gray's Inn-road. I am an Optician.

1500. Have you been engaged in collecting signatures for petitions?—I am well known to a good many firms about Holborn and that particular district, and I undertook to leave petitions at different places so as to get the signatures of the men. I did so in many cases, and in one particular case I got a man in the Gray's Inn-road to obtain signatures.

1501. How did he obtain them, do you know?—By the people passing by. He is here, and he can answer for himself.

1502. What did you do yourself; you only employed him?—I simply employed him. I left the petitions at the different places.

1503. Did you give him any instructions?—None whatever; the only instructions were these: that on girls were to sign, and no children.

1504. Were the people to be of age?—I did not tell him that.

1505. Or to be ratepayers?—I did not tell him that.

1506. But anybody that came might sign?—Anybody passing, so long as they were over 16 or 17 or 18.

1507. Were you paid according to the number of signatures that you got?—No.

1508. Do you receive any payment at all?—I have received payment, but not for that, because that was out of my own pocket.

1509. You have received payment for getting signatures to petitions?—For giving the petitions out and getting signatures to them.

1510. Then did they bring back the petitions to you when they had been signed?—I collected them.

1511. Did you look at them?—I looked at them.

1512. At each one?—Yes.

1513. Did you look at the names to see how they were written?—I simply looked to see that they were not written in the same hand.

1514. To see whether they put their addresses to the signatures?—Yes.

1515. Was this a house-to-house canvass of yours?—No.

1516. Had you any table?—I had a table in the Gray's Inn-road, outside Mr. Grellier's shop.

1517. Do you know how many signatures you got; how many petitions did you have?—I daresay I had 14 or 15 petitions.

1518. Were they numerously signed?—Yes; some have got three or four names on them, and some have got 40 or 50 names on them. I daresay there are 500 signatures altogether.

1519. Did you find any name upon the petitions which ought not to have been there, because sometimes they put in names of horses, or extravagant names?—There was not one in this case; that I can vouch for.

1520. You cannot vouch for the people having signed their own names?—No. But what I mean is, there not having been any fictitious name. I am so well known about there, living for 21 years in one house, that I know pretty well those people who pass every morning.

1521. The people who passed by this table coming from the other side of London might have signed, and you would have known nothing about them?—

They

12th May 1887.]

MR. MIDDLETON.

[Continued.]

They come from Finsbury Park, and other places about there, and they have been up and down so long that I recognise their faces.

1522. But you did not sit at the table all the time yourself?—No, not all along; but part of the time I did.

1523. How long a time would you be there?—From 9 to 10, from 12 to 1, and from 4 to 5, perhaps.

1524. Is there one hour in which the people sign more than another?—Yes, in the morning, and at night-time, and between 12 and 1. I had the table there specially, Mr. Grellier being a friend of mine, so as to get the signatures of workmen from Cuhlt's yard; that was the idea that I had in having the table there.

1525. Did you ever put any of those petitions in public-houses?—I never did. I object to that altogether.

1526. We have heard that you were employed by Mr. Wilson?—Yes.

1527. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] Who is Mr. Wilson?—Southampton-row is where his place of business is. Sewing machine manufacturer, that is what I should rather put him down as.

1528. Does he live in that neighbourhood?—No, he does not.

1529. Where does he live, then?—He lives in the Hildrop-road, Camden Town.

1530. Did he employ you in this matter?—He did.

1531. You say there were 14 or 15 tables under your charge; where were they?—No; I said I had only two tables. I said I had 14 or 15 petitions.

1532. Did you get any money from Mr. Wilson?—Yes.

1533. How much did you get from him?—£. 2. 15 s.

1534. Was that for the expense of the tables?—No.

1535. Did you pay for the tables yourself?—Yes, I did. Perhaps that is not quite the truth, because they did not charge me anything for them. I got them gratuitously.

1536. You got them lent you?—Yes.

1537. And you got 2l. 15 s.?—Yes; but I might add that I shall have a further sum of 2l. coming to me.

1538. Were there any writings upon the table describing the nature and objects of the petition?—There were.

1539. What did they say on this occasion; what did the placards say?—"Anti-coal tax; signatures received here;" or "within," or something like that; that is tantamount to the words that were upon it. (*The Witness searched for a Bill unsuccessfully.*)

1540. However, what was on the placard was something of that kind: "Anti-coal tax petition; signatures taken here;" and did you, or those who presided at those tables, afterwards invite the signatures of passers-by?—I should rather say that they did, but I am not quite sure that they did. A table was there, and everybody coming who liked (there was a pen and ink there) had the chance of signing the petition.

1541. This was, as you said just now, in answer to an honourable Member, for the purpose of obtaining the signatures of the working classes:—Precisely so.

1542. Those who were returning from work in the evening?—That was the object of having a petition opposite Cuhlt's; it was simply to get the signatures of the working men coming out to dinner or going home.

1543. *Chairman*.] Did you ask them yourself to sign?—As I said just now, I was only there just between 9 and 10, and so on, and when passers-by looked at the paper I simply said, "Would you like to sign the anti-coal tax paper?" That is what I said.

1544. And you signed it yourself, I presume?—No, I have not.

1545. Why did you not sign it?—Because I had signed it before.

1546. And you only signed once?—I only signed once.

1547. *Colonel Bridgeman*.] Have you had much experience in regard to petitions?—No.

1548. You have never undertaken petitions before this?—No.

1549. There

12th May 1887.]

Mr. MIDDLETON.

[Continued.]

1549. There are 14 or 15 of them, are there not?—Yes.

1550. A previous witness said that, in his opinion, if all the petitions were sifted which were sent to Parliament, not above 25 per cent. of the signatures would be found to be genuine: is that your opinion?—It is not.

1551. What proportion of the signatures do you consider would be found to be genuine?—Every one of those which I had to do with.

1552. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.] They are genuine, as far as you could tell by inviting passers-by to sign?—A good many of them are round the neighbourhood. I could bring them up within a very short time.

1553. But you could not tell that the man who signed signed his correct name?—No, but there would be a guarantee if he came, that he did sign his correct name; if he said that he signed the paper, and that was his writing, I should believe it.

1554. But all you did when you were in command or presiding over this table was, either to invite or to see a signature placed on the paper by the individual who signed?—Yes.

1555. But you have no knowledge, and could have no knowledge yourself, that that was a genuine signature, except so far as it was signed by the man?—It was signed by the man, and I know no man signed twice; and, as far as I can find out by the correspondence between the register and the signatures, those signatures are to be found, and are genuine.

1556. Chairman.] You looked at them all, did you?—Very nearly; I am doing a little work in registration.

1557. How many signatures do you suppose you got altogether?—I daresay 500 or 600.

1558. And you think that you can state that all those 500 or 600 signatures were correct signatures?—I do, as far as that goes. There is simply one man of the name of Huntley, of 82, Judd-street. He does not live there now, but he must have signed his old address; he did live there. A Mr. Mitchell lives there now. Huntley was a lodger. I have taken great care to go and look round to see all those people, the same as Mr. Grellier.

1559. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.] I understood you to say that the vast majority of those signatures were those of persons who belonged to the working classes?—I did not say that. I said the object of putting the table opposite Messrs. Cubitt's was to get the working men to sign; but when gentlemen came from Haverstock Hill, Finchbury Park, Crouch End, and all those places, they would sign as they passed. I could not say that the majority were working men.

1560. Do I understand you to say that the majority of the signatures were not, in your opinion, those of persons belonging to the working classes?—No; I say there was a fair number upon both sides.

1561. But what we call the working classes are numerically much more numerous than the leisure and trades classes, are they not?—I suppose all of us who have to earn our living may be called working-class people. They would come under that category.

1562. I understand you to say now that, in your opinion, these petitions signed at the tables were signed by many tradesmen?—By tradesmen; you may put it in that way; tradesmen and working men.

1563. I am now dealing with the class of tradesmen; would you be able to say that the petitions were signed by many tradesmen?—No; I should not be able to say whether they would belong to the class of tradesmen or not.

1564. Chairman.] Do you know Huntley yourself?—No, but I could find him.

1565. Do not you think it rather odd that a man should sign his old address?—Yes. I went to the house, and I there found Mr. Mitchell, who lives at the address, 82, Judd-street.

1566. Do you know a party of the name of J. Jones in Cromer-street?—I do not know, but I could find out, if you think it requisite.

1567. How do you make out a man signing his address as Compton-road, when

12th May 1887.]

MR. MIDDLETON.

[Continued.]

when there is no Compton-road in that district?—But might he not live in Compton-road?

1568. But there is no Compton-road in the district?—But he might be a passer-by coming by train from some place or the other. I happened to see the signature, and I wondered where Compton-road was.

1569. How would you account for it if he was not known at a Compton-road in another district?—I should say it must have been simply a waste of time and ink, and everything else, to have written his name down and put a false address.

1570. But that would not shake your confidence in the correctness of the signatures?—Certainly not. I saw the man write the address, and I could not say to him, Is that your true address?

1571. But still you say you believe that all those signatures are correct, and the addresses are correct?—All I can say is that everybody who signed those petitions that I had to do with signed them with their own hand.

1572. But you could not say that they signed it with their own name?—I could not guarantee that.

1573. Mr. Dalrymple.] You say there were as many as 14 or 15 petitions obtained in this way at the stationer's door?—No, I had 14 or 15 petitions to deal with; I put one at the printer's, one at Sage's, one at Patman and Fotheringham's, and one at Hewlett's, and places like those.

1574. But they were all within Holborn?—Yes.

1575. From what places did those petitions profess to come to the House of Commons; how were they described?—The petitions I got for Mr. Wilson, and, as far as I know, he got them from Lancaster House, Savoy.

1576. But I want to know when those petitions signed by people whom you describe reached the House of Commons, where they professed to come from; from what localities?—They all professed to come from Holborn; in the district of Holborn and King's Cross. King's Cross was the outside.

1577. Although they really emanated from passers by in the Gray's Inn-road, and they may have borne the signatures of people in all parts of London?—That was simply the King's Cross one.

1578. Do you understand what I mean; the petitions professing to come from King's Cross bore the signatures of persons who were passers by in the Gray's Inn-road?—Yes, to an extent.

1579. To what extent?—It was put there as I said just now, to catch Cuhitt's men, and people from Eley's and from other workshops when they were passing at breakfast time between eight and nine in the morning, and at dinner time at one o'clock, and in going home in the evening.

1580. You said a man might be a passer by coming from a train; how could he be described as belonging to the district?—He would simply put down his private address.

1581. Then what would be the good of the petition purporting to be from the district of Holborn when it might be signed by a person passing from a train coming from the ends of the earth?—That is so; that is one of the disadvantages.

1582. Then you said, although many of the people were merely passers-by, that you knew them, and could bring them up; you were only there a few hours, were you?—Yes.

1583. But how could you bring the people up who were arriving from the country who were signatories to this petition?—I could not do that, but I could bring up anybody from Harrison-street, or any of the neighbouring streets.

1584. I am not throwing doubt upon the petitions; but what check would you have upon the signatures when you were not there?—Because I have sufficient confidence in the man I placed there.

1585. No doubt the names were signed to the petition, but what check have you upon the petition that the parties were resident in that neighbourhood?—None whatever.

1586. Were the sheets so signed, sent back to some central point to be fixed to the headings, or were the headings with the wording of the petition at the head

12th May 1887.]

Mr. MIDDLETON.

[Continued.]

head of the sheets?—The wording is at the head of each one; there were about three pages or so, and each one was pinned to the other.

1587. Then at each of the tables there were petitions with the heading with the language of the petition?—Yes.

1588. Mr. Donald Crawford.] How much did you pay the man you employed at that place?—The money was really paid out of my own pocket. I do not know whether that is quite a fair question to ask, is it? I have no objection to answer the question.

1589. I have no objection to tell you why I ask the question; it is important to the Committee to know how much money is expended upon this getting up of petitions?—But it did not come out of Mr. Wilson's pocket; it came out of my own. I had the man three days, and I paid him 2 s. a day.

1590. And you had 14 petitions in your charge?—I had 14 or 15.

1591. And you did only two of those by tables?—No, I did not say that; I think I said that perhaps four or five of those petitions were done by tables, and I will tell you where the other one was; I do not want to keep anything back. The other one was at Mr. Truelove's, the bookseller's, in Holborn. I had two tables.

1592. I thought you said just now that you had more than two tables?—No, I had only two tables.

1593. But you say you got up 14 petitions?—Yes, but I gave them to the different firms round Holborn. I put one at Sage's, in the Gray's-inn-road, the show-case place; and I put one at Drew and Cadman's. I put one at Nettlefold's, one at Patman and Fotheringham's, in Theobald's-road, one at Hewlett's, and so on.

1594. When you say you put the petitions at certain firms, will you just describe what was done; was there a table?—No.

1595. Then you mentioned the name of Nettlefold; did you give a petition to one of the members of the firm?—No; I happened to know the name because I take his goods; I happen to know the name of the party who took it there, and that would no doubt be good enough to shew Mr. Wilson, who employed me. He took the petition, and got the signatures.

1596. Mr. Wilson took the petition to Sage's?—No; I took them to Sage's myself, and gave them to a Mr. Wilson.

1597. Who signed that petition; was it merely the workmen of that firm?—Yes, merely workmen of that firm.

1598. And when you referred to those various firms, it was for the purpose of the workmen of those firms signing the petitions?—Precisely.

1599. And nobody else?—Nobody else.

1600. Say you had 15 petitions, about how many can you remember were sent out at one time?—If it was only 15 altogether, I should say 10.

1601. Then you said that you had two tables, one opposite Mr. Grellier's; where was the other?—The other was opposite Truelove's, in Holborn.

1602. Was it in the street?—Yes.

1603. That accounts for 12; how would the other three petitions be got?—Perhaps I have not been properly understood; I say that in the streets I got about five petitions signed; the other 10 were from firms.

1604. Then of those five petitions you had tables for two?—Yes.

1605. And how were the other three done?—If the 10 were done in the firms and five were done in the streets, that makes the 15 that I speak of.

1606. But surely it is a clear question; of those five you did two by tables; how did you do the other three?—I got the five from the two tables; two from Holborn and three from the Gray's Inn-road.

1607. Then why were those obtained at the two tables; how did they come to be made up in five petitions; why did you not send them in as two petitions? That I cannot answer; I had nothing to do with that at all; I simply handed them in from day to day.

1608. When one was finished you got another one?—Yes, and so I handed them in.

1609. You said that Huntley had lived at 82, Judd-street, though he did not live there now?—Yes.

1610. Who

12th May 1887.]

MR. MIDDLETON.

[Continued.]

1610. Who told you so?—Mrs. Mitchell, the landlady of the house.

1611. Do you know anything about a man of the name of Baum, of 64, Harrison-street; supposing it was said that that was a bad signature, do you know anything about him?—It is a curious thing, but I cannot find 64, Harrison-street; I can find 63 and I can find 65, but I cannot find No. 64, though I live just in the street opposite; but if I had known the name I could have found him. If I have any names that are in dispute I can find them well enough.

1612. Do you know anything about the man, J. Smith, 15, Ossulston-street?—No.

1613. But you had not got those names before you?—No; if I have the names given to me I will soon find them out.

1614. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] From your experience, standing two or three hours a day at the tables, what proportion of people readily signed the petition against the coal tax?—I do not know how to answer that question; I should say, putting it in that way, it is more the working classes than anybody else.

1615. But out of 20 passers by, or 20 people you asked, how many do you think would sign the petition?—Perhaps five out of 10 or 15, or something of that kind; many had signed it before, and many said it did not matter to them which way the thing was going; it would not benefit them; and that like.

1616. A previous witness has told the Committee that only one out of 15 he found would refuse to sign the other way; is that the reverse of your experience?—I have always found that people, in the little I have had to do with this sort of thing, are more ready to sign the Anti-coal Tax Petition than they were for the continuance.

1617. You would aver that to say the one out of 15 was the other way, was a great exaggeration?—I certainly do; I never had any difficulty in getting signatures at all for the Anti-coal Tax; they were all in favour.

1618. *Chairman*.] Perhaps you put the case so fluently that they were convinced by your eloquence?—Not at all.

1619. Did you at all explain to them what it was?—I simply told them that they would get off 1 s. 1 d. a ton.

1620. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Perhaps you could tell the Committee as to some of these firms, what proportion of workmen signed; how many workmen there were, and how many out of them signed?—I think it was about nine; the time was short, and I was told that they would have to come in.

1621. Nine workmen; and how many would be employed?—I suppose it was 30 or 40; but many of them had signed before, and the same with Charles Baker, of Holborn. You will find Baker and Co. signed first of all, and some of the workmen signed it there and some at the place in the Tottenham Court-road. There are 40 or 50 of the people of one house signed, and the same at a place in John-street, Bedford-row, where the people all signed it.

1622. But the petition is marked, "The Petition of the Inhabitants of King's Cross and its Vicinity." Do you suppose the people were told that it was a petition from King's Cross and its vicinity?—What I say is, that they had a paper on the board with good strong printing, so that they could see what they were signing.

1623. And they were not asked if they belonged to King's Cross and its vicinity?—I do not think they were.

1624. And they were not asked whether they had signed before?—They were told if they had signed before not to sign again.

1625. Mr. *Dabymple*.] With reference to the case I put to you before, do not you think that it is a very remarkable description (the "Petition from King's Cross and District"), considering they were many of them passers-by, coming, as you say, from the country?—But a great many of the signatures would be those of men from Eley's and Cabitt's.

1626. How do you know that?—I know it from knowing that the men signed as they came out.

1627. But as representing the feeling of the locality, it obviously, to your knowledge,

12th May 1887.

Mr. MIDDLETON.

[Continued.]

knowledge, contains the names of many persons resident in the locality; but you obviously also have no means of checking the names of people who may come from the country by train?—No, that is so; but we had a special object in obtaining the signatures of workmen in Cubitt's and other firms.

1628. Do you think this is the sheet of signatures you obtained (*exhibiting the petition to the Witness*)?—I believe it is.

1629. But I do not see any names put down as being in Messrs. Cubitt's employ?—I said that I knew there were 200 or 300 of them who signed, but I knew that a great many of them were from Messrs. Cubitt's.

The Witness withdrew.

Mr. JAMES EDMONDSON, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1630. *Chairman.*] WHERE do you live?—At No. 64, Cromer-street.

1631. What is your occupation?—I have been a messenger, and I have been a night watchman.

1632. Did you watch the signing of these petitions?—Yes.

1633. Where did you have one?—Gray's-Inn-road, at the corner of Prospect-terrace, Grays-Inn-road.

1634. How did you carry on the business there; did you put the petition upon a table?—Yes, upon a table, somewhere about this size (*pointing to the shorthand writer*).

1635. Did you tell the people what it was?—There was scarcely any necessity for that, inasmuch as there was a printed paper stating that it was for the repeal of the Coal and Wine Tax.

1636. That paper you had received from somebody?—That paper I received along with the table from Mr. Middleton.

1637. Mr. Middleton, the gentleman who was here just now?—Yes.

1638. And you acted upon his instructions, did you not?—Yes, I did.

1639. And you told the people that they were not to sign if they had signed before?—I did not say anything of that kind.

1640. You only invited them to sign?—Yes.

1641. Men, women, and children?—No, women were prohibited, and as for children, why, the idea was never contemplated.

1642. Did you then receive payment?—I received payment.

1643. I think Mr. Middleton stated that you were the person he alluded to?—I do not know whether he alluded to me or not.

1644. May I ask what remuneration you received?—I received 2s. a day.

1645. Were you very successful in getting signatures?—The first day I thought I was pretty well, but I was three days, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the three last days in April; the first day I thought I was tolerably successful.

1646. How many signatures did you get the first day?—Really I do not know; I never counted them, for Mr. Middleton came at night and took the petitions away.

1647. Did you never look at them to see who had signed?—I saw every signature that was put to them, attached to them. I saw it done.

1648. And they put their signatures and their addresses?—Yes.

1649. *Mr. Dalrymple.*] Were those who signed, as far as you noticed, persons belonging to the locality?—I should think so. On those petitions they put down their addresses as well as their names, so that those petitions will tell you whether they resided in that locality or not.

The Witness withdrew.

12th May 1887.

PETITIONS GENERALLY, FOR AND AGAINST.

MR. FREDERICK GEORGE NETHERCLIFT, called in, sworn;
and Examined.

1650. *Chairman.* You are an Expert in Handwriting, I believe?—Yes; I have been so for the last 40 years.

1651. Have you been engaged in the House of Commons?—Yes; and have also been engaged in all courts of law in the United Kingdom; Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales.

1652. I think you had to do with a case something like this in 1865?—Yes, I had; it was the Petition of the Indian Prince, Azeem Jah.

1653. How many petitions have you looked at?—I believe I have looked at all against, and I have looked at half-a-dozen in favour of, the continuance of the coal and wine dues.

1654. What do you find?—Of course my examination has been but superficial, because I was only here on Wednesday, and it is impossible in that time to look at thousands of names; but I find that not a great many, I should think not more than a hundred, all through those petitions against the continuance, a hundred names in all I should say, were not genuine names. I found the same handwriting repeated, some repeated by the same hand immediately afterwards; I suppose that is in the case of a family; that may be by authority, but I cannot tell that. In some cases the handwriting is too good for the position of the supposed writer.

1655. A hundred names not genuine in the petitions against?—Yes; in 26 rolls altogether.

1656. How many have you examined?—I have examined the following petitions: I have looked at Bloomsbury, Holloway, North London, Holloway again, Bloomsbury again, Islington, the petition of Joseph S. Baker (they are large clothiers in Holborn), two from Marylebone, North St. Pancras, Chelsea, North West Ham, Kentish Town, Bow, Bethnal Green, and one from the Burnhope Colliery at Durham, signed by the miners, but the handwriting is all one; so I suppose the miners could not write and someone signed their names for them. Then I have looked at petitions from Somers Town, North London, Pentonville, Kennington, Camberwell, and Bethnal Green again; King's Cross and its vicinity, and East St. Pancras.

1657. Have you any details with regard to this King's Cross petition?—There are from 20 to 30 signatures that I should say were not written by the persons by whom they purport to be written. (*The Witness handed in a note of his observations.*)

1658. Have you seen the petition from Haggerston?—No, I have not seen the Haggerston petition.

1659. Have you any more remarks to make upon these petitions —Not with regard to the petitions against the Bill; but when I have taken up and have only examined half-a-dozen of those in favour, there I find there has been a gross fraud committed. There is one petition that I do not believe has a single genuine signature in the whole of it.

1660. How many petitions have you examined in favour of the Bill?—I have examined the petitions from Dulwich and Peckham, Bromley-by-Bow, London, south-east, Greenwich, and Brixton and Peckham. I have examined those petitions this morning. All through those six petitions I find fraud committed. I trace the same hands two or three times.

1661. Are you expert enough to trace the same handwriting in two different styles of writing?—I think so.

1662. Supposing there are people who slope in the ordinary way, either way, do you consider that you are able to detect that?—Generally; I have had experience of that in anonymous letters, which have been handed to me. Where a person who usually writes with a slope one way writes an anonymous letter, he

12th May 1887.]

Mr. NATHANOLITE.

[Continued.]

he usually slopes the other way. Most anonymous letters I have received to examine have been done in that way.

1663. Do you think those petitions have been done by more than one hand?—Yes; by one or two, or in fact I might say by three hands, but I have not had sufficient time to determine. It would possibly take a day to look over one roll, if I were to look over every signature; but I can trace where the same hand has been at work. That was the case with the petitions that I had before me in 1865. I noticed where one hand commenced and ended, and then it was passed over to the other man; there were three hands engaged in that.

1664. Mr. *Mulholland*.] About how many signatures were there in those six petitions?—Do you mean the six that I am looking at now (*in favour of the continuance*)?

1665. Yes?—I should think several thousand altogether.

1666. Where those signatures were in the same writing, were they in large batches together?—Yes, they were.

1667. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] About how many petitions did you examine against the Continuance Bill?—About 26, I think; but I must tell you that three of the rolls, perhaps, comprise one parish. I have given them to you according to the number of rolls, but the three rolls go to Marylebone, and two to another parish.

1668. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] But they were separate petitions?—Yes; I take them up as they are; they are separate rolls.

1669. Did you say that you only found about a hundred signatures that you thought were not genuine?—Yes.

1670. That is in those 26 petitions?—Yes.

1671. Then you mentioned that there was one from Durham, in which the handwriting appeared to be written by one person, did you not?—Yes; that was, I suppose, because the miners could not write, and I suppose someone who got their authority to sign wrote their names for them. I could show you the petition if you like. (*The petition was exhibited to the honourable Member.*)

1672. Those signatures do not appear to be disguised at all?—No, there is no disguise whatever about them.

1673. I presume you do not include those in your hundred doubtful ones?—No, because they may be written by authority; the men may not be able to write, and some person may have written for them.

1674. I know there must be reasons, but I am only asking for information. Those being written in the same hand, why might not the same thing be in the case of another petition where you see a large batch written in the same hand?—I should look to the position of the person in forming my judgment as to the writing. I find there is an instance of a woman put down as a charwoman, where the writing is uncommonly good; and also a carman and a potman, where the writing is too good.

1675. If you see a hundred or two signatures written in the same hand by miners you presume that is written by authority?—I do not presume anything. I only give my opinion as an expert that it is so; perhaps, not being able to write, the foreman or manager of the mine wrote down the names for them.

1676. But I think you did presume that they were written by authority, because you did not include those amongst the hundred signatures that you gave to the Committee?—I did not include them, certainly.

1677. Because you thought it might be presumed that the person so writing them had authority to do so?—Yes.

1678. But if you saw a batch of signatures of miscellaneous occupations written in the same handwriting you would say they were not probably genuine?—Yes; there I should go by the fact of the occupations of the people they came from; if they were reputed to be householders I should be doubtful about them.

1679. You stated that in the petition from East St. Pancras there were 20 or 30 signatures that you would challenge?—Yes. In 1865 the Committee made me put down 40 names, and I was not caught tripping once; they were all examined,

12th May 1887.]

Mr. NETHERCLIFT.

[Continued.]

examined, and not one of the people said he signed it. I could do the same thing here. I could pick out 40 names, and show that not one has been written by the person it purported to have been written by.

1680. When you said there were about a hundred which you thought were not genuine in the whole of those petitions against the continuance; does that include the East St. Pancras petition?—Yes.

1681. So that the East St. Pancras petition contains a very large proportion; 20 or 30 per cent. of the whole?—Yes; but, as I have said before, my examination has been very superficial. I have not had time to do it. I ought to have a week to do it in.

1682. You first dealt with the petitions against the Bill; and now we come to those in favour of the Bill, of which only six have yet been examined by you?—Yes.

1683. Is that because you have not had time to examine more?—Yes, it is.

1684. There was a large number of petitions presented to you for examination?—Yes, there was a large number. I had all those to examine into.

1685. You took certain petitions out of that number at random?—Yes, I did it at random. (*On the Haggerston petition being submitted to the Witness.*) I have not seen this. May I appropriate this and study it for a little while?

1686. I should be glad if you would, as I have a particular question to ask about it. Assuming that the Committee were already aware that the petition had all been written by one hand, could you tell, on a cursory glance, whether that hand is the same as the one you say you have traced in the other petitions, or in any of the other petitions?—(*After examining.*) I recognise that I have seen this hand before in some of the other petitions.

1687. Would it, in your opinion, upon the very cursory examination you have been able to make, that you see only one hand there, or more than one hand?—I find three capital M's made exactly alike, about 20 lines apart. I should say, as far as I could tell, that that was the same hand.

1688. You said, with regard to the six petitions that you had examined, that you traced one or two hands; do you mean one or two hands writing large batches throughout the whole six, or perhaps one or two hands in one, and two or three different hands in another sheet?—Yes; in another sheet.

1689. So that, taking the six altogether, there might be a good many hands engaged in writing those long batches?—No. I think, in one of the long sheets, I only recognised two hands; they are done together in sheets.

1690. It is rather difficult to explain my meaning. Now, taking the sheet where you saw two hands, and taking another sheet belonging to another petition, do you find another batch of fictitious signatures?—I do.

1691. Was that batch written by one of the two hands in the sheet first referred to, or is this a third hand?—I could not answer that question now, because I have only just seen this, and I should like to compare this with the other, as I have not had an opportunity of doing that.

1692. Leaving that petition out of the way for a moment, and taking the other petitions, taking the whole six petitions together, how many suspicious hands do you notice?—I notice three different hands in this one, but whether they are the same hands as wrote the signatures to the Haggerston petition, I could not tell until I compare them.

1693. Mr. M^r Lagan.] Is the Durham petition it would appear to me to have been written by different hands, except the addresses of the individuals?—Yes; I do not say that all the names are written in the same hand. I only point to a certain batch where the word "miner" occurs.

1694. The others are genuine signatures?—Yes.

1695. They appear to have filled it up afterwards?—Yes. I have not mentioned anything with regard to the other signatures, but merely where the word "miner" is shown.

1696. Chairman.] Would you be so good as to look at the first signature upon the Lower Clapton petition; what is that?—William Lee.

1697. Does that bear any likeness to any other handwriting that you have seen?—I have seen this handwriting before.

1698. It

12th May 1887.]

Mr. NETHERCLIFT.

[Continued.]

1698. It is an ordinary handwriting, I think?—Yes.

1699. You do not see any very strong likeness between that and the others?—At a glance I do not.

1700. It looks like a real signature?—It is a very nice free signature. I do not recognise this at present; it does not look like a disguised hand.

1701. There is the Dulwich and Peckham petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; do you recollect that one?—Yes.

1702. Do you think that is a very genuine petition?—No. I doubt whether there are any genuine petitions in favour; hardly any, at any rate. That is the petition, No. 5990, presented upon the 20th of April 1887.

1703. Will you repeat the observation you have to make upon that petition?—I doubt there being a genuine signature in the whole of that petition there certainly are not 50; the name of "Brockley" occurring about a dozen times is the course of the roll in the same hand.

1704. Would you look at the Notting Hill petition?—In the Notting Hill, Stepney, and Limehouse petitions there are several signatures, in fact a great many, which are not genuine; all the latter part is entirely fictitious; it is dated the 24th March 1887, No. 3750.

1705. What do you say with reference to the Bromley petition?—Numerous of those signatures are spurious.

1706. What do you say with regard to the South East London petition?—A great many of those signatures are spurious.

1707. And the Greenwich petition?—There are a great many spurious ones also there.

1708. And the Brixton petition?—That is the same; that is to say, the Brixton and Peckham petition.

1709. But I understand the last four do not seem to be quite so bad as the first two upon your notes?—I have looked at them very superficially. I think there are one or two of the streets that may have been genuine in the list that I have examined, but in the first ones I cannot think so. You will find, again, in the first petition that the paper is so clean; looks as if the writing had been all done upon one table, and then the sheets tacked together afterwards, and not taken about from house to house. It does not seem to have been handled at all, but all done upon one table.

1710. Have you seen enough of these petitions, for and against, to say that those upon one side have probably been done by one man or two men, and the others all by one or two men?—No; I will not say, so far as regards those petitions against, that they have been done by two men. I find that there are a great many that are not genuine signatures done by the same hand, but I think that very probably a third hand has been engaged on the petitions for the Bill.

1711. You do not find that the same hand has been engaged upon the petitions for and against?—No.

1712. Mr. Donald Crawford.] Did you say that you found a certain number of signatures in the petitions against the Bill that were bad?—I believe they are not genuine; that they are not written by the persons they purport to be.

1713. To the extent of about 100 names?—Yes.

1714. In the 26 petitions?—Yes, but not in the same hand as has written in the others. I do not recognise the same hand in them; it is quite a different style altogether in those in favour of the Bill.

1715. When you say that the signatures appear not to be genuine, what do you mean to be understood by that?—That they are not written by the persons whose names appear there, and that they are written by someone else. I notice the hand of someone else there that I have seen before in looking over these things.

1716. You have explained very clearly with reference to some of the petitions, that you see a large batch of signatures apparently written by the same hand?—Yes, in those petitions in favour of the Bill; it is not so with the others.

1717. Those being written by the same hand cannot be, of course, genuine, unless they had authority. Now, with regard to those petitions against the Bill, is there any other class of signatures that are not genuine, except the batch which appear to be written in the same hand?—In the petitions against the Bill they

12th May 1887.]

Mr. NEWBURY.

[Continued.]

they are not written in hatches, but only in two's, I may almost say, not in hatches.

1718. You see a signature in one part of the petition and you recognise the same hand that you have seen higher up?—Yes, that is so.

1719. They only occur perhaps in two's in those petitions against?—Yes, but in the petitions in favour they are in hatches.

1720. Could you give approximately the percentages of the false and the genuine signatures?—I could not until I have gone through them. I have only gone through a small part of them, but the forged signatures are more than four times more numerous in the petitions in favour than they are in those against.

1721. *Chairman.*] You mean to say that if there are 25 in one case there are 100 in the other?—Yes, and if there are 100 forged against, there are 400 forged for.

1722. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] You say there are about 100 signatures that you consider not genuine in the petition against the Bill?—Yes.

1723. *Chairman.*] Do you think on looking at a signature that you can tell whether it is a false signature?—There is something about some of those signatures which will tell you at once that they are not genuine.

1724. A man writing his own name would write it more firmly?—Yes.

1725. A man writing an assumed name would not write it so firmly?—He would not make it entirely alike; there would not be that character about it.

Mr. LEWIS HENRY ISAACS (a Member of the House); Examined.

1726. *Chairman.*] I THINK you are a Member of Parliament?—Yes; I am.

1727. Have you seen any petitions being got up?—Yes; I saw about a week ago a petition addressed to this House, to which signatures were being obtained at the corner of the Gray's Inn-road, and the Clerkenwell-road, opposite the Holborn Town Hall; it was a petition against the continuance of the coal and wine dues. I watched for some quarter of an hour or 20 minutes on one occasion the manner in which the signatures were obtained, and the class of people who signed the petition. It is a very busy part; two wide roads converge at the point; the petition was put upon a deal table at the corner of the roads, and a man was in charge of the petition to obtain signatures; the hour was between twelve and one o'clock, when a great many boys and girls were leaving work from factories near at hand; and I saw scores of those boys and girls who were clearly under age, some of them not more than 13 or 14 years old, sign the petition.

1728. Was there anybody in charge of the table?—Yes; there was a man in charge of the table; his table was put on the footway against a hoarding, and on the hoarding was pasted a bill stating that the petition was against the continuance of the coal and wine dues; the whole thing struck me as showing the utter worthlessness of petitions when the signatures were so obtained; and seeing that a Committee had been receiving evidence of that kind, I thought it my duty just to tender myself to say what I had seen with my own eyes.

1729. Did the man seem to invite the people to sign, or did they come of their own accord?—I do not say he invited them, but he was very ready to put pens and ink into their hand when they came to the table; and I noticed that he never seemed to take exception to any person coming up to sign, no matter how young.

1730. He never asked you to sign?—No.

1731. *Mr. M'Lagan.*] Have you ever seen any other petitions signed except that particular one?—I think I have seen petitions signed in that way, but I never took so much notice. Perhaps I ought to explain to the Committee why I took particular notice of this. I happen to be the surveyor of that division of London, and my offices, the official ones which are assigned me, are at the

O.73.

N

Holborn

12th May 1887.]

MR. ISAACS, M.P.

[Continued.]

Holborn Town Hall; therefore, it is my duty to be there pretty frequently. That circumstance brought that particular petition under my notice, and I was struck with the very careless manner in which it was being signed, and the evident intention on the part of the person in charge of it not to be too particular about the age of the people signing it. I watched on one occasion for a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes, and I can safely say upon that occasion between 50 and 60 boys and girls signed that petition.

1732. Did you see the man sign for any of them?—No, I did not.

1733. They could all sign themselves?—Yes.

1734. Mr. *Mulholland*.] Would you recognise the man who was at the table?—I do not think I should be able to recognise him; he was a man about 5 ft. 6 in.; a thin pale-faced man, but beyond that I could not go. I do not think I should be able to recognise the man.

1735. *Chairman*.] Do you know the exact date when this was?—It was the week before last.

1736. But do you know the date?—I do not know the date.

1737. Mr. *Daniel Crawford*.] How long did you watch the proceedings?—I watched the proceedings for a quarter of an hour, and it struck me as being peculiar. I was pained to see it, because it occurred to me that the petitions which are presented to Parliament, and of which I have presented many myself, are no fair indication of public opinion. I came to that conclusion from the manner in which I had seen this petition signed.

1738. Supposing this had been a petition which we have been investigating; I do not quite know whether it is or not; but supposing it were the petition which we have been investigating, which was signed upon a table placed in that neighbourhood, and supposing 30 of the signatures picked out at random were examined by a person hostile to the petition, and supposing that out of those 30 only two persons under age had been found, a boy of 18 and a boy of 16 years of age, would that be very consistent with your observation?—No; because the proportion of those who signed the petition to which I refer was so largely in excess of that which you have now given; it was so completely the other way. I would venture to say during the time I was watching the signatures being appended to that petition, that out of 100 signatures appended to the petition, at least three-fourths would be those of boys and girls obviously under age.

1739. *Chairman*.] Did you see this going on on more than one day?—Yes; I saw the petition; it was there for the best part of a week.

1740. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] Did some of the signatories appear to you to be the employés of some particular works coming out at the same time of the day?—No, there was no particular workshop there; there are a great many workshops about there; the Gray's Inn-road is full of workshops, occupied by printers, machinists, and so on.

1741. But with regard to their being under age, if they were streaming out of a large place where they were employed, you would say that the signatures had described the feeling of the locality?—I think from what I saw they looked on it as a good joke to sign this petition.

1742. If it had been represented to the Committee that the signatures of many of those persons were the signatures of persons employed close by, you would admit that that was an expression of the opinion of the locality?—Yes; admitting that they were sufficiently old to form an opinion upon the subject that they were discussing; but it struck me as to the utter want of value to be attached to the petition by reason of the age of the people signing it.

Monday, 16th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.
Colonel Bridgeman.
Mr. Donald Crawford.
Mr. Dalrymple.

Mr. William Lowther.
Viscount Lynton.
Mr. McLagan.
Mr. Mulholland.

THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM LOWTHER, IN THE CHAIR.

PETITIONS GENERALLY FOR AND AGAINST.

MR. FREDERICK GEORGE NETHERCLIFT, called in; and further Examined.

1743. *Chairman.*] I THINK you undertook on Thursday to examine more closely into the various petitions?—I did.

1744. Have you done so?—I have.

1745. With what result?—The petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues are nearly all forgeries, nearly all of the signatures are false. I have a list of them here, which I beg to hand in (*handing in a list*).

1746. Will you kindly read the list?—I took the rolls up one by one, and put them down as I took them up. I began with Ilford, presented 18th of April 1887. There are 669 signatures for that petition, nearly all of which I believe to be false: I believe they are all false; but I say nearly all, because it may happen that there are half a dozen genuine signatures. The person who did this might have put a few genuine signatures; so that if I were to make such a sweeping assertion as that they were all false, my evidence would be open to be invalidated by the production of a few genuine signatures. With regard to the Haggerston petition, it is the same there; it contains 449 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false. I trace the same hand in that petition.

1747. Do I understand that you trace the same hand in both the Ilford and Haggerston petitions?—Yes, the same; I believe altogether three hands have been employed, or there might have been four.

1748. You think that three or four hands have been employed in nearly all the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues?—I do; that is my opinion; the Stratford and West Ham petition is the next, which was presented on the 18th of April; it contains 74 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false. The Greenwich and Camberwell petition has 1,406 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false. The petition from St. Pancras, presented on the 22nd of April, contains 1,464 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false. The Southwark petition contains 24 signatures, many of which are false.

1749. *Colonel Bridgeman.*] Does that comprise the whole number of signatures to the petition, that is to say, the 24 are not the false ones but the whole number of the signatures to the petition?—The whole number of signatures to the petition. The petition from Shoreditch has 187 signatures, and nearly the whole of those I believe to be false; the North Hackney petition contains 140 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the London South-east petition contains 1,688 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the East London petition contains 1,093 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be

16th May 1887.]

Mr. NETHERCLIFT.

[Continued.]

be false; the Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland petition contains 1,553 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Deptford and Greenwich petition contains 434 signatures, nearly the whole of which I believe to be false; the petition from West Ham, Leyton, and Leytonstone, contains 393 signatures, nearly the whole of which I believe to be false; the petition from Dalston and Stoke Newington contains 1,440 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Southwark petition contains 664 signatures, nearly the whole of which I believe to be false; the Hackney and East London petition contains 222 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Clackenwell petition contains 328 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the City of London petition has 465 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Bromley St. Leonard petition contains 425 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Brixton and Peckham petition contains 1,525 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Homerton and Hackney petition contains 281 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Bow petition contains 281 signatures, nearly the whole of which I believe to be false; the Dulwich and Peckham petition contains 1,970 signatures, nearly the whole of which I believe to be false; the Notting Hill, Stepney, and Limehouse petition contains 221 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Bromley-by-Bow petition contains 517 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the North-west Ham petition contains 1,139 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the North Hackney petition contains 181 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Greenwich petition contains 1,936 signatures, all of which I believe to be false; the Hackney and Dalston petition contains 141 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the London South-east petition contains 1,796 signatures, nearly the whole of which I believe to be false; the Brixton and Peckham petition contains 1,525 signatures, all of which I believe to be false; the Lower Clapton petition contains 169 signatures, nearly all of which I believe to be false; the Greenwich and Camberwell petition contains 1,406 signatures, and more than half of those I believe to be false; I believe there are some genuine signatures there. That is the whole of the petitions in favour.

1750. *Chairman.*] You have not added up the totals, have you?—Not yet.

1751. Those you believe to be almost all false?—Yes, and they are all executed by two or three hands.

1752. They are almost all done by the same people?—Yes, by two or three hands.

1753. Did you notice the first signature in each petition?—There was a great similarity between them.

1754. Between each first signature?—Yes; I mean the signatures underneath the prayer of the petition before the list of signatures commences. I noticed in one or two instances that the person who signed that has also signed some of the other signatures.

1755. Do you mean lower down?—Yes.

1756. How many are those petitions altogether?—Thirty-three; those petitions were all in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties.

1757. Now how is it with regard to those against?—I now come to those petitions against. The Chelsea petition contains 1,206 signatures, about 40 of which I believe are not genuine; I do not pledge myself to that precise figure. The Bloomsbury petition contains 516 signatures, of which about 25 are not genuine. The Pentonville petition contains 107 signatures, of which about 12 are not genuine. The Bethnal Green petition contains 503 signatures, 16 of which I doubt. The Islington petition contains 117 signatures, and about nine I doubt. The Kennington and Camberwell petition contains 115 signatures, and seven I doubt. The Burnhope Colliery petition contains 119 signatures, of which I doubt eight; but there the word "miner" is written several times in the same hand.

1758. Are the signatures written by the same person?—Yes, in some cases; I do not attack them; they may be written by authority. I only say that the word "miner" is in a different hand.

1759. The

16th May 1887.]

Mr. NETHERCLIFT.

[Continued.]

1759. The word "miner" and the address are almost all in the same hand?—Yes.

1760. There is no attempt to disguise that?—No, there is no attempt to disguise that; but I have put them down because Mr. Crawford asked me whether I included those. The North St. Pancras petition contained 66 signatures, and eight of those I doubt. The petition of Joseph S. Baker contains 12 signatures; I do not doubt any of those; I think they are all genuine. The West Islington petition contains 38 signatures; I believe those are all genuine. The East St. Pancras petition contains 117 signatures; I doubt 30 of them. The East St. Pancras petition of another date contains 78 signatures, and 20 of them I doubt. The Kennington petition contains 63 signatures, and five only I doubt there. The North London petition contains 155 signatures, and 16 of those I doubt. Another North London petition contains 218 signatures, 20 of which I doubt. The Marylebone petition contains 351 signatures; I doubt 25 of them. The Somers Town petition contains 107 signatures, and 12 I doubt. The Bow petition contains 127 signatures, and six I doubt. The St. Pancras petition contains 77 signatures, and 12 I doubt. The King's Cross petition contains 81 signatures, and 20 I doubt. The West Islington petition contains 71 signatures, of which I doubt 12. The Holloway petition contains 62 signatures, of which I doubt 10. The Bethnal Green petition contains 127 signatures, of which I doubt 12. The Marylebone petition contains 78 signatures, of which I doubt 15. The North London petition contains 185 signatures, and 1 doubt 20. The West St. Pancras petition contains 101 signatures, of which I doubt 12. The Kentish Town petition contains 148 signatures, of which I doubt 12. The Bethnal Green petition contains 36 signatures, of which I doubt about six. The Holloway petition contains 35 signatures, of which about six are doubtful. The East St. Pancras petition contains 168 signatures, of which I doubt 35. I make the total 5,284 signatures, out of which I doubt 426.

1761. You have not made the same summary with regard to the other petitions, have you?—I have not yet made that out; there are, however, very few to deduct from the general sum total. I wish, however, to observe with regard to these signatures against the continuance that I do not notice that they are done as a forgery, but they are done by the same hand. Many times a person in a house has signed for four persons in the house; I do not notice any fraud in those signatures, as there is in the case of the petitions in favour of the continuance. I find four ladies in a house, and there is only one signature for them; that is to say, you can see they are all written by the one person, therefore of course those are included.

1762. And the address of the house is given?—Yes.

1763. Therefore you think there is more fraud practised in those in favour than in those against?—Yes, because those are a palpable fraud upon the face of it, but I do not see palpable fraud in the signatures to the petitions against.

1764. Mr. *McLagan*.] Not in any of them?—No, not in any of them.

1765. You think that three or four hands did the whole of the signatures in the petitions in favour?—I do; I notice the same kind of capitals made, especially the L and the M, particularly the M, which goes through the whole of it.

1766. Supposing people are educated at the same school, they all make the same kind of letters, do they not?—Yes, while they are at school; but after they leave school I think they all adopt a fashion of their own.

1767. I can tell some of the boys who were educated at my school to this day by their particular handwriting; were the addresses given to every signature?—They purport to be given; some of them you can scarcely read, they are so badly done.

1768. You could tell that there was an evident intention to conceal the signatures?—Most decidedly; I have had considerable experience of that kind in the year 1865; it was just the same then.

1769. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Did you examine particularly the Haggerston petition?—Yes, I did.

16th May 1887.]

Mr. NETHERCLIFT.

[Continued.]

1770. Do you think that more than one hand signed that?—I cannot say whether it was all in one hand; there is more of one hand than there is of another.

1771. If a previous witness has said that it was all done by one hand, that would be possible, would it?—Certainly.

1772. Mr. Mulholland.] Did you see any intention to conceal in the petitions against?—No, I did not.

1773. You did not see that in any case?—No, I did not see that; but of course looking over so many thousands of signatures I could not give that attention that I could to a single signature. If I were to take every signature separately, it would take me months and months; besides I had none of the handwriting of the person suspected to have done this, so that I had nothing to go upon.

1774. Mr. Donald Crawford.] What per-centage is 426 out of 5,284?—About 8½.

1775. Would you take one of the petitions, "for" at random, and show the Committee a specimen where you see a large hatch of signatures, which you call in question?—Yes, I can do so; but I have not made any memoranda.

1776. Take any one which shows a large number of fraudulent signatures. (The Witness exhibited a petition, and pointed out certain peculiarities in the alleged fraudulent signatures.)

1777. In the sheet before us would you say that there were two or three hands, or only one hand?—I think that would be all one hand.

1778. Chairman.] Would you look at it with regard to sheets (pointing to a particular part of the petition)?—I believe the same hand wrote both those sheets.

1779. Mr. Dalrymple.] I understood you to say that you saw traces of some two or three hands through all the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues?—Yes, I do.

1780. Chairman.] Do not you find that amongst a certain class of people the handwriting is very similar?—Amongst uneducated people it is very similar indeed, and therefore easily imitated in this way.

1781. Mr. McLogan.] This is the petition from Southwark, and this is the petition from Huggersston (exhibiting the same to the Witness). Those signatures are all forgeries I think you said?—Yes.

1782. Have you any idea whether they were all done by the same hand?—(After examination) I think it very probable.

Mr. CARLTON ROBERTS, re-called; and further Examined.

1783. Chairman.] You wish to appear again before the Committee?—I did not request it.

1784. Did you not see some of the other petitions?—I did, but that was after I had been summoned.

1785. Did you examine them?—I did.

1786. Have you any remarks to make upon your examination of them?—I selected as nearly as possible one name from every sheet of the two petitions, which I had your permission to look through. I gave those names to a number of men whom I was able to get together in the short space of time I had on Saturday, and I received the following reports from the men, who made the inquiries into the two petitions which were given me.

1787. The two as to which Mr. Netherclift said on Friday, that there was not a genuine signature in either of them; they were the Peckham and Dulwich and Camberwell petitions.

1788. What was the result of the inquiries?—The first report is from Mr. Harris, who states that he called upon R. W. Coldwell, 3, Nettleton-road, New Cross,

14th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

Cross, who said he had signed. The next was F. Arnold, 21, St. James'-road, New Cross; he was not at home when Mr. Harris called, but his wife believes he signed. Then F. Cook, 3, Creek-road, Deptford, said he signed; Mr. Monday, Royal Hill, Greenwich, said he signed; Mr. Baloy, 101, Royal Hill, Greenwich, said he signed; Mr. Waugh, 59, Trafalgar-road, said he signed; Mr. Cannadine, 353, New Cross-road, said he signed; and Mr. Harris called upon Clifford, Amos and Clerk, three other names with their addresses; the first had signed, the last two were not at home; every one had signed whom he saw, except the two that were not at home. Then Mr. Arnot, of 142, Foxberry-road, Brockley, called upon D. G. Kidd, of the Anerley Arms, who said he had signed; upon A. G. Sadd, 144, Anerley-road, who said he had signed; upon the manager of the Belgrave Dairy Company, 124, Anerley-road, who said he had signed; upon Mr. Larner, 67, Anerley-road, who said he had signed; upon Dr. Gordon, "Ormleigh," Upper Norwood, who said he had signed; upon Mr. Sutton, "Aberdeen House," Anerley, who was away from home; upon Mr. Aldous, 15, Wastdale-road, Forest Hill, whom he found had removed; upon Mr. Rider, 55, Wastdale-road, Forest Hill, who said he had signed; upon Mr. D. S. Bailey, of the Chandos Arms, Honor Oak Park, who said he had signed; and upon Mr. Delahoy, 61, Wastdale-road, Forest Hill, who said he did not sign.

1789. But his name was on the petition?—Yes.

1790. He called upon ten and said all had signed excepting one?—Yes.

1791. How many more did he call upon?—I think they had from 12 to 13 each as far as I can recollect. I simply took the petition and had the names called out to a clerk who took them down. I did not make them out myself, but he took one from each sheet, because I thought if we took them all from one sheet which might be all good signatures, that would not be so good as taking one from each sheet. I have next a report from Charles F. Church of 8, Carden-road, Nunhead, who says: "I hereby declare that a list of signatures having been handed to me for verification, I have tested them with the following result: Carter, 10, Magdala-terrace, East Dulwich, signature is genuine; D. Brown, 4, Whateley-road, East Dulwich, not at home; Noah Penfold, 53, Warlingham-road, East Dulwich, not at home; J. Fry, 8, Grove Vale, East Dulwich, genuine; K. Winterborne, Grove Vale, East Dulwich, genuine; Gratwicke, 9, Palmerston-terrace, East Dulwich, genuine; Fooke, 7, Palmerston-terrace, East Dulwich, genuine; Kelsey, 1, Palmerston-terrace, East Dulwich, genuine; Walker, 3, Palmerston-terrace, East Dulwich, genuine; Pella, 38, Barry-road, Lordship Lane, not at home; Charles Samney, 9, Chesterfield-road, Lordship Lane, not known." Mr. Nathaniel R. Francis, of 47, Crawford-road, Brockley, called upon 15; 11 signatures were genuine, two were not known, one said he had not signed, and the rest were not at home; that is 11 genuine out of 15. Then William Terrill called upon 16; 15 of them were genuine and one was not at home.

1792. Those people who called to verify the signatures are people whom you have employed?—Yes; but they are not the canvassers. When I received permission, about six o'clock on Friday evening, to inspect these two petitions, I wrote at once to Mr. Board at Brockley, and I said, "Two of your petitions, as far as we can fix them, were questioned by Mr. Netherclift upon the previous sitting of the Committee, and I have permission to inspect these two. Will you meet me at the House of Commons on Saturday with three or four men; as many as you can get together in the time who are reliable, to make inquiries. He met me on Saturday and we went through the names upon each petition, and picked off one name from each sheet as a test. I did not know the district myself, and I did not think it would have been much benefit for me to have gone personally, as it would have taken me too long to find the places.

1793. You have not got the sum total of how many were called upon; how many were genuine, and how many were absent, have you?—No, I have only just received these returns as I came into the room.

1794. Have you made out the sum total?—(The Witness looked through the Returns.) Sixty-one calls were made, 48 of the signatures were found to be genuine, seven were not at home, two were false, three were not known, and one had removed.

16th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

1795. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Which petition is that?—We went through the whole of the sheets on the two petitions, or through a portion of both of them; the Peckham and Dulwich petition, I think, was the one that struck me on Wednesday as being the one that was particularly suspected, and Camberwell was the other petition; they were both in the same district.

1796. How did you pick out the signatures; I thought you said at one time that you took about one in nine?—No; I took one in about every sheet.

1797. And that was done at random?—Yes.

1798. By whom; by Mr. Board?—Yes; I said to him several times, Do not be careful to pick out what you consider to be the best, or the more genuine ones; just take one from each sheet. Because as we came across one sheet which the canvasser recognised, we called out the names, and he would say, "Oh; that is my sheet, I got those signatures;" so I said, "It is no use picking out that sheet;" he said, "I got every signature upon that sheet myself so I know that the names are right."

1799. How many canvassers were present when you picked them out?—I daresay all the people who were to make inquiries were present when they were picked out; but I did not give the canvassers the sheets to do in the districts they had collected from; I was very careful not to do that.

1800. But they were present?—They were present.

1801. Mr. *Cavendish Bentinck*.] Do you know anything of Mr. Samuel Henry Taylor, who gave evidence at the last meeting of the Committee, and who said that he had taken the petition round Brockley to obtain signatures?—No, I do not; I explained at the former sitting of the Committee that I only employed Mr. Board in the matter, he was responsible to me; Mr. Taylor was employed by Mr. Board. I had no knowledge of anybody who collected signatures.

1802. The object of my question was to ask you whether those sheets which you have now referred to were any of those to which signatures were obtained by Mr. Taylor?—I really do not know; they might have been or they might not; that is just the difficulty; I am unable to fix the sheets.

1803. One or two of the signatures you said were those of persons who had removed from the district; do you know whether they had removed before the date, or the alleged date, at which the petition was signed?—I have given the Committee all the information I have. Those calls were made after two o'clock on Saturday, and I asked them to complete as many calls as they could by Saturday evening, because I should have to place the report before this Committee on Monday.

1804. That is all you really know about the matter?—Just so.

1805. Mr. *M'Lagan*.] Could you depend upon the character of the men who went round to check the signatures, or were they taken off the streets?—Yes; they were known to Mr. Board. Directly I had permission of the Committee to inspect the petitions, and knowing that most probably the Camberwell and Dulwich had to do with Mr. Board; I wrote to Mr. Board, saying, "A petition of yours was impugned by Mr. Netherclift in these terms, that there was not a genuine signature to it. I have had some trouble to see the said petition, and if you will meet me at the House of Commons on Saturday at 12 o'clock, we will take some names from it." It struck me at first that we would take the names off and make inquiries ourselves, but afterwards it struck me that it would be better to give the inquiries to certain men and let them make the inquiries as they knew the district.

1806. The report of Mr. Netherclift is that in the Camberwell petition they were nearly all false signatures?—Yes.

1807. And that in the other petition they were nearly all forged signatures?—Yes.

1808. Whereas according to you about four-fifths of the signatures checked by these gentlemen are genuine?—Yes.

1809. Including those not at home, but striking out the others?—Yes.

1810. Did you consider those about two of the worst petitions?—They were specially singled out by Mr. Netherclift as the two worst when he was last examined. If it were not for prolonging this inquiry, I could undertake to put a very different complexion upon these petitions from that put upon them by Mr.

1846 May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

Mr. Netherclift's evidence. For one matter, he says these petitions have been concocted by two or three people. These petitions have been handed in by 115 to 120 people; and although one or two of the canvassers may have known one another here and there, yet practically to bring about this effect it would have been collusion between 115 to 120 people who never knew each other until they were brought into contact in consequence of this inquiry.

1811. Were they all canvassers?—Yes, the 115 were. It would have been impossible for three people to have concocted these things and to have handed them in through 115 different people, according to Mr. Netherclift's evidence.

1812. If they were people who never knew one another?—Yes, that is my contention, except those who were brought together casually at Mr. Board's house; prior to this inquiry I would undertake to say that, with the exception of one or two who worked together, they would not have the slightest knowledge of each other. Those who worked at Ilford and Stratford could not possibly have the least knowledge of the Camberwell and Dulwich people; 115 at least have been engaged upon this work; and when Mr. Netherclift says it has been the work of two or three people—

1813. Colonel *Bridgman*.] How many signatures have you sent in?—About 90,000.

1814. But it is only 26,000 that Mr. Netherclift has examined?—Just so; but the sheets comprising the 26,000 impugned signatures have come from all parts, and from all my different agents. Then again no three men have been paid for 26,000 signatures. The largest amount any one person has been paid for is 4,000. I have Mr. Usher here who did the petition signed by 1,464 people, and I understand he is prepared to tell the Committee on oath that he went into the houses. It is only by a stroke of good fortune that I have him here; he came here the other day, and I said, "There may be an opportunity for your giving evidence, if you will come upon the Monday." Then as to the first signatures upon the petition, if the Committee will give me time, deducting those that Bidmead acknowledged that he forged, I believe that everyone of the first signatures to the petition will be true and genuine signatures. The Southwark and Hackney petitions were compared. Now the man in Southwark could have had no knowledge of, or dealings with the man in Hackney; there was not the slightest possibility of their collusion for this reason; Mr. Hallett never knew Mr. Board until this inquiry; Mr. Hallett knew nobody but myself. I was the only person capable of collusion, and the only way in which these signatures could have been concocted all round would have been for me to say to my agents, "It is a great deal of trouble for you to go round; sit down and write them down yourself."

1815. Mr. Netherclift told the Committee that he thought the Haggerston and Southwark petitions were done by the same hand?—Bidmead himself told the Committee the districts that he manipulated; he did not go to Southwark.

1816. Mr. Hallett, one of your *employés*, has told the Committee that, in his opinion, not 25 per cent. of all the signatures to petitions which come to Parliament are genuine; that does not tally with the statement you have now made that four-fifths of your signatures are genuine?—I differ entirely with Mr. Hallett upon that point. I should not believe it possible to find at any moment from 115 to 120 men willing to forge the signatures of dozens of people in London for 5 s. or 6 s. a day.

1817. But you must recollect that Mr. Hallett has a good opportunity of knowing the people he employs, because he employed them, and you did not employ them; how do you account for Mr. Hallett making that statement?—All I can say is, that if Mr. Hallett employed people upon whom he could only rely for doing 25 per cent. of their work, he did me a great injustice in taking my money for doing it. If any man could be brought forward for forging the signatures to any one sheet, there is no trouble I would not take to punish him.

1818. Does it strike you that Mr. Hallett is a man you would not like to employ again?—I would never employ Mr. Hallett again. In fact, I would never delegate this matter of petitioning again to anybody. I cannot at all express what I have gone through during the last fortnight on account of this

16th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

matter. I feel that I have placed trust where trust should not have been placed.

1819. *Mr. Cavendish Bentinck.*] Do not you think there would be a difference between canvassing from house to house, as you describe it, and a person taking signatures from the streets?—Certainly. If it is a house-to-house canvass, you have a guarantee that a certain sort of people have signed it; you have a guarantee that they do exist, whereas in a street petition anyone may sign a wrong name, or give a wrong address.

1820. Then with regard to a petition signed in the street, you do not think that the calculation of Mr. Hallett would be so far wrong?—No; they may sign anything in the street.

1821. I suppose you, like many of us, have seen petitions signed upon tables in the streets?—Yes, I have.

1822. What is your opinion upon that mode of proceeding?—There is no responsibility attaching to it. A man may put anything down; probably he does not agree with the object, and he will try and destroy the value of the petition.

1823. You have seen, yourself, I suppose, petitions signed in that way?—Yes, I have.

1824. Signed by all classes of persons?—Yes.

1825. You have seen them signed even by persons under age, have you not?—I do not know that I have seen that.

1826. *Chairman.*] You said that you had a canvasser here?—Yes; the man who canvassed the St. Pancras petition, I understood, containing 1,464 names.

PETITION FROM ST. PANCRAS, IN FAVOUR.

Mr. HENRY USHER, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1827. *Chairman.*] You are a canvasser, I believe?—Yes, I am.

1828. And you were employed in getting up a petition?—I was.

1829. Do you happen to know this petition from St. Pancras (*exhibiting the Petition to the Witness*)?—Yes.

1830. Do you recognise the first name?—I have not seen this (*pointing to the heading*) before.

1831. Therefore you have never seen James Davies' name before?—There are two or three Chapel-streets in London; there is one in Camden Town, and one in Islington. I canvassed Chapel-street, Camden Town, but I do not recollect Davies' name in particular.

1832. Do you recollect any of the signatures there?—Yes.

1833. How do you canvass; do you go about from house to house?—From door to door.

1834. Do you ask who lives there, or do you know who lives there?—I do not ask any question as to that; I merely mention the matter that brought me round, and request them to sign in favour of it.

1835. And you do not recognise any of those signatures?—I recognise some of the names.

1836. And the addresses?—Yes (*after examining*). I recollect some of the addresses; and there are some that I do not recollect. There is one here from St. John's Wood. I called at no place in St. John's Wood; but still I might have met some one that might have signed it, being away from home.

1837. Where might you have met him, do you mean in the street?—I did not ask many in the street. I do not suppose I asked above a dozen altogether in the street.

1838. And this is on the same sheet as the addresses that you know, is it not?—No, this sheet is in College-street, Camden Town, and round about there. This sheet (*pointing to another sheet*) is in St. John's Wood; High-street, St. John's Wood; I know nothing about High-street, St. John's Wood.

1839. And

18th May 1887.]

Mr. USHER.

[Continued.]

1839. And you do not know anything about those on that sheet?—(After further examining the petition). There are a lot of names I do not recollect.

1840. Turn again to a sheet where you do know the names; do you know all the addresses there?—I called there (pointing to a sheet of the petition).

1841. You called at all the addresses on that sheet?—It would be a very difficult thing to say that I got the signatures of those; but I know that I have done all that neighbourhood.

1842. And you did not do the next neighbourhood?—I do not recognise it, and I have no recollection of doing it.

1843. It is out of your district?—Yes, I did not go beyond St. Pancras; St. John's Wood is more Marylebone way, I think.

1844. Did you generally see the people sign, themselves?—Yes, I did.

1845. Do you ever find signatures that you have not seen signed; did the people ever take the petition into the house and sign it without your seeing them do it?—Yes, frequently; the weather was very inclement the greater part of the time I was doing it, and as a rule the people would open the door and I would explain to them the object of my visit; and although I had an ink bottle and pen with me ready for their signatures, frequently it was the case that they had to go inside to look for their glasses to sign, and mechanically took the sheet in with them and brought it out signed.

1846. Mr. McLagan.] There is one signature there from St. John's Wood?—Yes, there are several.

1847. Are there other signatures from St. John's Wood upon the same sheet?—Yes, High-street and Henry-street, St. John's Wood; I know them but I did not call at them.

1848. But I would like to know if the whole of the other signatures are from that district; whether you got them or not, I do not care?—This is mainly St. John's Wood.

1849. Then you had nothing to do with St. John's Wood?—I did not do anything with St. John's Wood.

1850. Then really that petition does not represent the signatures of those in the St. Pancras District?—The gentlemen whom I was working for had Marylebone, Paddington, St. Pancras, and Hampstead; I did the greater part of St. Pancras.

1851. We were told that there were 1,464 signatures there; is that an approximation as near as you can remember to what you obtained; did you obtain 1,000 signatures?—Every one of them.

1852. Were you ever asked during the whole time you were canvassing to sign for anyone; did anyone ask you to sign?—Frequently I was asked to do it; but I never would do it although they asked me to do it, and they told me they would sign their cross, and I said, No, it would be a heavy penalty upon my part if I were to sign it.

1853. No, it would have been quite legitimate?—Very well; but I never did it, for although I might commence it legitimately enough, the result might be that many parties might say they could not write, merely to get me to sign.

1854. You say that the petition was often taken away from you and signed inside, and therefore you cannot vouch for all the signatories being of proper age?—But there is this intimation that I gave them, that is was for grown-up people.

1855. Did any of those who signed appear to be under age?—Not one.

1856. You were exceedingly careful in taking those signatures?—I was.

1857. Did you look at the signatures after they were brought out to you?—I did not scrutinise them very sharply; I merely saw that there was the name and the address; that was the principal thing I looked after.

1858. Did you observe whether or not the signature was in the same handwriting?—Not at that time; I could not.

1859. You did not notice anything of the kind?—I did not notice anything of the kind.

1860. You would have challenged it if you had noticed it?—Decidedly.

a.73.

O 2

1861. Colonel

16th May 1887.]

Mr. USHER.

[Continued.]

1861. Colonel *Bridgeman*.] Do you know which of those sheets were got by you and which were not?—I believe this one in College-street and Camden-road was got by me.

1862. Would you look it through and tell me how many sheets were got by you and how many were not (*the Witness having been taken sheet by sheet through the petition*)?—There is one that I feel confident of, and six that I am almost sure of. I would ask if this was one of the petitions that came through the agent for St. Pancras. There was one party that was canvassing the same direction as I was, but he had nothing whatever to do with either Mr. Ball or myself. I mentioned it to Mr. Ball, and by the description I got of the other petition I have an idea that that may be it.

1863. Mr. *Mulholland*.] You spoke of another party canvassing the same district; was that upon the same subject of the coal and wine duties?—So it was represented to me.

1864. Was that only one street?—I came across his track several times.

1865. Did you get the signatures of some of the same people who signed his petition?—No; people who signed his petition would not sign mine.

1866. Have you come across any other petitions upon other subjects besides the coal and wine duties?—Yes, there were petitions about. In fact, I had a great deal of difficulty in getting along on account of a petition that there was something about the closing of shops at a certain hour of the night.

1867. Were there canvassers going round from house to house?—Yes, I believe they were, to the shops particularly, because they were greatly in my road; they impeded my progress to a great extent.

1868. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] Did the people always write both their names and addresses?—Yes; of course I could not guarantee that they put down their own name. All that I know is that they put down a name and an address.

1869. You never wrote them down for them?—No.

1870. Nor the address?—Nor the address.

1871. Will you just look here a moment; do you recognise this first sheet (*exhibiting the petition to the Witness*)?—I certainly would not like to be bound to it; I certainly did that neighbourhood, and there were a great number of names in the neighbourhood I could not get.

1872. This is the one that you have spoken positively to; do you think you may be mistaken about that?—I do not recollect any signature, though I did the street.

1873. Not in any of the sheets?—No, there is none that I could say positively; but those sheets that are smudged a little lower down I should be under the impression might be mine.

1874. Looking at the first six signatures, have you the slightest doubt that they are written in the same hand?—I know that I did not go to 156, Camden-road; whether they are written in the same hand I could not say.

1875. Looking at the first six or seven signatures, are they in the same hand or are they not?—They may be; but I would not like to give an opinion confidently, because there is something about the sheet I do not recognise.

1876. But you said you did before?—I did not do so positively; I know I went to Camden-road, but I did not go to 155, because No. 155 is more up towards the Brecknock-road.

1877. Would you look at Cannon, No. 237, Camden-road; have you the slightest doubt that that is written in the same hand as the "Camden-road" up towards the top?—I am not an expert in that matter, and I cannot say.

1878. Then you did not do the first, I think you said?—I do not think I did; I know I did not go to No. 237 or to 255.

1879. This was the street, as I understand your evidence in answer to an honourable Member opposite, that you were most positive that you had done?—No; I think those down upon the smudged part I have more confidence in, for the reason of their being smudged, on account of its being a very stormy day when I was doing it; that was what gave me the impression that it was mine; but if you recollect I mentioned to the honourable gentleman that I did not

16th May 1887.]

Mr. USHER.

[Continued.]

not recollect any names. I pointed to the name of Piper; now I recollect going to the shoemaker at the corner, and he would not sign it.

1880. *Chairman.*] I understood you were confident of one sheet at least; is that the sheet of which you were confident (*pointing to a sheet*)?—I mentioned that I had done College-street, and part of the Camden-road.

1881. Could you point to the sheet of which you are confident (*the Witness examined the petition*)?—

1882. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] Was not this first sheet the sheet of which you said to Colonel Bridgeman you were confident?—I told the honourable gentleman that I had done this sheet, but that I did not recognise any particular name.

1883. You went over all the sheets very carefully; is there any other sheet in the petition that you can say to the Committee that you got the signatures to?—There is none of those that I can positively swear to as mine; there are some of them having the appearance of being mine on account of my doing the same streets and about the same numbers; but those numbers particularly in the Camden-road I know I did not do; for instance, there is No. 237 I know I did not do, and No. 155 I know I did not do.

1884. Would you just show me one of the sheets that you think you may have done?—(*After unrolling the petition and examining it.*) Perhaps this (*indicating a sheet*) has more the appearance of one that I did, but I would not like positively to swear to it. I did the Camden-road, and when I did it, it was a bitter stormy day; and being smudged it gives me the idea that I may have had something to do with it.

1885. This sheet begins, "A. Hawkins, 176, Kentish Town-road, N.W."?—There are none of the names that I recognise.

1886. But you think that you may have done this sheet?—I think I may have done this sheet.

1887. Now, you notice it is a peculiar "K" in Hawkins; now, look at the "K" in Kentish Town-road; have you any doubt that the "Kentish Town-road" there is written by the same person?—The writing is very similar; I do not recollect this number, 304.

1888. Did you do No. 176?—I did up as far as the railway station on one side; I did the eastern division of Kentish Town-road first; that was on the right-hand side as you go up from Camden Town; that was the side of the road I did when it was so stormy.

1889. Now look at "J. Jennings, 69, Camden Town-road" and look at "A. Allen, Kentish Town-road," and look at the "K" in Kentish Town-road also; do they not appear to be done by the same hand?—I believe there is a similarity between them.

1890. Is it not in fact almost a fac-simile?—The writing is similar, but I would not like to pass an opinion as this appears to have been taken upon both sides of the road at the same time, and I only did one side.

1891. *Chairman.*] Did you go to Kentish Town-road?—Yes, I did.

1892. Was there any other canvasser went there to your knowledge?—I do not know; there appears to be a similarity in the writing.

1893. Was there any other canvasser went there to your knowledge?—I do not know anything about the Kentish Town-road in particular; I was canvassing for Mr. Ball, but there was another canvasser, another who was a stranger to Mr. Ball.

1894. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] You are not able to say to the Committee that you obtained signatures to any of those sheets?—I cannot recognise any of them.

1895. Excepting the first one?—The first one had a great similarity, but I do not recognise any of the names.

1896. I thought you told me positively that you did not do the first one just now; in answer to me you said you never went to these numbers?—I have not been to those two numbers, 237 nor 155.

1897. Does that lead you to suppose that you did not get the signatures to this petition?—Yes, that especially is a guide to me, because that has evidently been done from house to house, and I have been to neither of those numbers.

16th May 1887.]

Mr. USHER.

[Continued.]

1898. Who employed you?—Mr. Ball.

1899. At what rate were you paid?—I was paid at the rate of 6s. a hundred.

1900. And how many signatures did you obtain; how much were you paid?—I have not got an exact recollection regarding it, but I think I did somewhere about 3,000 or over as near as I could judge.

1901. Was that all in the St. Pancras district?—Yes.

1902. Was it all for the same petition?—Yes, for the same petition.

1903. Were you employed upon any other petition about the same time?—Nothing whatever; I devoted my whole time to it.

1904. This petition is headed, "From the Inhabitants of St. Pancras and others." I understand you, in going over the sheet with the honourable Member opposite, agreed that the greater number of these sheets did not come from St. Pancras; is St. John's Wood in St. Pancras?—I think not.

1905. And Paddington, is that in St. Pancras?—No, Paddington is not.

1906. Notting Hill?—Notting Hill I think would be in Paddington; Marylebone is between St. Pancras and Paddington. I think St. John's Wood would be in Marylebone.

1907. Mr. Dalrymple.] How long did you take over the work?—I think about five weeks.

1908. Five weeks?—Yes, I think it was about that.

1909. Was there any stipulation about the time you were to take?—No, there was no stipulation as to the time, but the last week Mr. Ball told me I would have to knock off in a few days, perhaps in a week.

1910. Did you receive any payment until the work was over?—I received payment as I had done the work.

1911. So much a hundred?—Yes, so much a hundred.

1912. Do you live anywhere near those whom you asked to sign the petition?—Yes.

1913. In what part?—Camden Town, near the Camden Town Station.

1914. But you went very far a-field from that, did you not?—No.

1915. Do you mean to say that these signatures upon the petition belong to people who live anywhere there?—Yes, entirely in St. Pancras.

1916. As I understand, you recognise very few of the signatures as the signatures of the people whom you saw?—I do not recognise any of them particularly.

1917. Had you separate sheets upon which to get the signatures?—Yes.

1918. That was the method you pursued?—Yes, with the petition to it.

1919. Chairman.] With the heading to it?—Yes.

1920. Mr. Dalrymple.] With the heading to what?—The heading to the petition. It was a large printed petition, and I had that with me.

1921. Was that to exhibit?—Yes, to exhibit.

1922. Where did you take the sheets when they were filled?—To Mr. Ball.

1923. Do you know who attached the sheets to a particular title before presentation to the House of Commons?—No, but I believe Mr. Ball did.

1924. You would say, would you not, looking at this petition now, that it is improperly described as coming from the district that you visited, because you find in it signatures of persons living in St. John's Wood where you never went?—No, I never went outside St. Pancras; I may have occasionally received signatures from any part of London; but they would be exceptional.

1925. Supposing you recognise even one sheet, you would say, would you not, that it was evidently pasted on too many sheets of which you know nothing?—All I can say is that I do not positively recognise one of them. There are two or three that have an appearance of similarity to those that I did, but I do not recognise them.

1926. Is there any other petition in the room of which you know anything at all?—I am not aware that there is.

1927. Because, if you know nothing almost of any of these sheets, there is none of your handiwork in the room as far as I can make out; there is nothing of your five weeks' work in the room?—Not that I have seen.

1928. You

16th May 1887.]

Mr. USHER.

[Continued.]

1928. You said you mentioned the subject with regard to which the petitions were being signed?—Yes.

1929. Were you asked to explain the subject to any of the persons?—Yes, frequently; it frequently took me a long time to do so.

1930. You think that the signatures which you received were given in reference to the subject of the Coal and Wine Duties?—I had to explain that before I got the signatures; people as a rule are extremely chary of signing for any purpose.

1931. You think upon the whole that the people knew what they were signing about?—Yes, I think there is no doubt about that.

1932. Viscount Lynton.] Were you occupied the whole of your time in getting those signatures?—Yes; the whole of my time from half-past eight in the morning till 10 o'clock at night sometimes.

1933. Did you make a house-to-house visitation?—Yes, I went from house to house.

1934. Did you go alone?—Yes, I went alone.

1935. Did you get the assistance of anyone to tell you as to the number in the street at which the people lived?—No; when I knocked at the door I knew no name in connection with it.

1936. What was your principle of setting to work; had you got a map of the locality, or how did you proceed?—I know the neighbourhood pretty well; I do not suppose there is a street or turning in the whole of St. Pancras but what I am aware of.

1937. Did you get any signatures in any public-houses?—Yes.

1938. Did you get any signed in the streets?—Very few.

1939. When you say "very few" what do you mean?—Perhaps I might have had a score. I did not make it an object to visit the public-houses, but I took the public-houses if they came in my line of call. If the last door I called at was a private house, and the next door was a public-house I went in to get the landlord's signature; sometimes the landlord would be in favour of it, and he would of his own accord take it round to his customers and ask them to sign.

1940. Upon that petition you cannot identify one single signature?—I do not positively identify one.

1941. Chairman.] Did you not state that you were confident of one sheet?—I do not think so.

1942. I thought you said you were confident of one, almost confident of six, and of the others you knew nothing?—I ought to explain that the numbers in College-street are about the numbers I called upon; and I said to the honourable Member examining me, that it was very probable I had done that.

1943. Are you in the habit of associating with other canvassers for petitions?—I do not know another one.

1944. Viscount Lynton.] I want to ask you if you have seen any other petition besides that in favour of the continuance of the Coal and Wine Duties?—I have seen no others but the one that I had.

1945. Will you look over that again and tell us distinctly what that was; were those separate sheets of paper upon which the signatures were written, or were they attached together?—No; they were single sheets, and I brought them in singly, that is to say, unattached.

1946. All one time at the end of your labours, at the end of five weeks?—No, occasionally.

1947. From time to time?—From time to time; it was not particularly at the end of a week, but some days between each.

1948. Then, in fact, you have really no information to give the Committee about this petition; you do not recognise it?—I do not recognise it; in two or three places it has a similarity, but I cannot say that I can recognise a single name.

The Committee-room was cleared.

After a short time the public were re-admitted.

16th May 1887.

PECKHAM AND DULWICH PETITION, IN FAVOUR.

MR. FREDERICK GEORGE NETHERCLIFT, re-called; and further Examined.

1949. Would you kindly look at this Peckham and Dulwich Petition, and point out which signatures you think are worthy of note, that is to say, are forged?—I should like to have time to do it, but I should say that all the upward writing is very suspicious.

1950. Will you select 50 or 60 names from that petition?—I will.

PETITIONS GENERALLY, IN FAVOUR.

MR. ERNEST ALFRED DENT, called in, sworn; and Examined.

1951. *Chairman.*] You have been employed in the detective service, have you not?—I am assistant to Mr. Attwood, Private Enquiry Agent, Catherine-street, Strand.

1952. What have you been employed by him for?—I have been employed by him for the purpose of investigating several of these petitions.

1953. Which do you call "these petitions"?—The petitions in favour of the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues.

1954. Which petitions have you seen?—From the summaries of the petitions which are published I find, according to my report, No. 41.

1955. Which is No. 41?—The meeting is supposed to have been held in Mile End Old Town, at which Mr. Francis Church was chairman. Now I made inquiries, and I do not find that any such meeting was held.

1956. What was the date given of the meeting?—I do not find it in my report.

1957. There is no such meeting?—There is no such meeting that I can find; I find that a meeting was held in the Mile End Vestry Hall on the 1st of February last, at which Mr. Charrington was present, supported by Mr. Isaacson, M.P.; that is a *bona fide* meeting, but as far as I can gather that was in no way connected with the petition No. 41. Then, with regard to petition No. 115, a meeting supposed to have been held at "Page's" Coffee-Rooms, Andover-road, Islington, purporting to be representative of the working men ratepayers of Holloway; as a matter of fact, the coffee-rooms were closed long before Christmas, long before the meeting was supposed to have taken place.

1958. Are there signatures to those petitions?—I believe simply the chairman signs in most of these cases.

1959. But still there was the signature of the chairman?—Yes.

1960. Have you made any inquiries about that signature?—As far as I can find, the name is not known.

1961. *Viscount Lyvington.*] Mr. George Rayner is the Chairman?—The name is not known at all events at "Page's" Coffee-Rooms. I have a note here that Mr. George Rayner had no business to speak on behalf of the working-men ratepayers of Holloway, for the simple reason that I saw several old inhabitants of Holloway, and they knew nothing of any such meeting. Mr. Walker, who is living in Andover-road, and who is connected with most meetings that take place in that district, knows nothing about it, and is, I think, prepared to swear that no such meeting took place. I also found that house-to-house visits were being paid in that district. With regard to No. 21, a meeting of ratepayers and householders purports to have been held upon the 15th of December, Mr. John Webber in the chair, at Parkfield-street; it is a short street with only two public-houses in it, and there is no other house at which a meeting could have been held; I made inquiries at both public-houses and also in the neighbourhood, and they know of no such meeting having taken place.

1962. Is

16th May 1887.]

Mr. DENT.

[Continued.]

1962. Is that meeting supposed to have been presided over by the Chairman, Mr. John Webber?—There is no house in the street in which that meeting could have taken place except in the two public-houses, and they have no room in either of them in which any meeting could have taken place. Then there is No. 43, a petition from a meeting supposed to have taken place at the Protestant Youths' Mission; I can find no such mission. There is a meeting supposed to have been held at The Bow Bells, No. 116, Bow-road, and I have it upon the authority of the proprietor of the establishment that no such meeting took place. And in the case of No. 4,386 petition, presented by one Mr. O'Connell, as chairman of the meeting, held at the "Palace" Arms, Pimlico, it was simply a meeting of Mr. O'Connell and a few friends, who met there for the purpose of discussion. He lives at Norwood; it is a meeting of Mr. O'Connell, the proprietor of the establishment, and a few friends, who met there simply for a convivial meeting. With regard to the Haggerston petition, I find there that a Mr. A. G. Williams, of 36, "Forest-road," Haggerston, was concerned in it; I understand he is the paid agent of a man named Cope, in connection with the Local Conservative Association, and I understand (whether that information is correct or not I really do not know) that Mr. A. G. Williams really did obtain some of the signatures to the Haggerston petition; with regard to that petition, I have three names. The Committee will understand that I simply had half-a-dozen names from the various petitions. I did not know the length to which the petitions were going, I simply took half-a-dozen of the names, and enquired. I have a memorandum of "Mr. Charles Gall, 79, Broke-road, name not known, house occupied by Charles Garrod."

1963. You took six names, three of which are not genuine?—That is so; I took them haphazard from the petition.

1964. Did you inquire into those names?—I have inquired into those three, and in two cases the names are not known; while one declares his signature to be a forgery; but it seemed to me that they had taken the names from a directory.

1965. Are the addresses given in the petition?—The addresses are given in the petition. It seemed to me that they had taken the names from a directory, and that the forger of the signature had put a name similar to the real name so as to avoid an absolute forgery. In one case, that of Mr. George West, of Malvern-road, Haggerston, this gentleman signed the petition against, but his signature is also attached to the petition for; and he tells me that if the signature was attached to a petition for, it is not genuine; that it is a direct forgery, and I believe those names have been obtained or attached to the petitions by this man Williams.

1966. You say you looked into three names; what are the other two cases?—I have no particulars as to them.

1967. Might they have been workmen or poor people who have moved away since; people in lodgings?—No. With regard to the Haggerston petition I find the persons who signed were persons in decent employ, and really respectable people occupying the houses with those addresses; I found that so; in the other cases, I think the people were not at home; I have made no note; I simply reported what I found to be the case; I made a general report. Then there is the petition, No. 4,391, from East London. I do not know that I am justified in saying so, but I believe that a man named Stephen Arnold, 24, Counts-road, Berdett-road, had something to do with it; his signature appears upon the petition, and from his answer to me I fancy he had something to do with getting up that petition.

1968. What is his station?—I do not know what his station is; he was under the influence of liquor when I saw him. I found in that case that the one or two signatures I had taken haphazard were not genuine. Then the worse one I came across was No. 4,404, from Lambeth, Kennington, and Westminster; the greater portion of this petition seems to have been obtained by a man named John Sharland, of 4, Bentrew-road, Kennington. He seems to be an old solicitor's clerk in the employ of Mr. Scudamore, the police-court solicitor. He comes backwards and forwards and he does odd work; in this case I find he has been obtaining signatures, telling the people that the public-houses were going to be closed about eight o'clock in the evening. In many cases the

16th May 1887.]

Mr. DENT.

[Continued.]

wife has signed for the husband, and also in one case I found that a child had signed, a mere girl; she had put down her brother's signature to it; in every case such signatures were without authority.

1969. Sharland stated that the public-houses were going to be closed at 8 o'clock, and they had signed this petition supposing it to be a petition against the early closing of public-houses?—Yes, supposing it to be a petition against the early closing of public-houses; so that I maintain the signatures have been obtained under false pretences. In one case I found that he told a man that the petition was against the adulteration of beer; I do not know whether the Committee wish for the names of the various people I called upon in that case, but they would certify what I say.

1970. If they are genuine people we shall be glad to have them?—I would read you all the various names on the list. There is H. Vokes, 9, Burdett-buildings, Westminster (the canvasser appears to have gone to the very poorest people; the wife appears to have signed on behalf of the husband, upon the distinct representation of Sharland that the petition was against the Early Closing Bill;) they told me that of course they did not get their money until very late in the day, and that they required to go into the public-house after 8 o'clock; there was no mistake about it. Now in the case of Ernest Durham, 29, Burdett-buildings, the sister, a little girl of eight or nine years of age, signed on behalf of her brother, who was not at home; but that was also on the representation of Sharland that the petition was against the early closing. Inglis is not known, but there is a person called J. H. Inglis; in that case I fancy the canvasser asked for somebody who lives at No. 34, and attached the signature himself. In the case of Cook, No. 7, East-street, Lambeth, Cook signed upon the representation of Sharland, that the petition was against the adulteration of beer.

1971. That was the same representation and the same person?—Yes; I asked in each case for a description of the man, and I afterwards traced it to him.

1972. You have not seen him?—No, I have not seen him; he is not to be seen; he just turns up now and again at his place of business. Then there is petition No. 4,736 from Clerkenwell; I find there are two signatures there out of about five or six in which the persons are not known; there are also several signatures in Windermere-street, Clerkenwell; I do not find any such street; the street is not known.

1973. Has that petition very many signatures to it?—I believe it is one of those long petitions with over 1,000 names to it.

1974. How did you choose the signatures?—I simply took them haphazard as the petition came into my hand; I took them here and there.

1975. Did you take them upon the handwriting?—No; the petitions appeared to me as they have proved to be so far of a bogus character, so that I took them at random.

1976. Those were all petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Dues?—Yes; I have not touched the petitions against. In the course of my inquiries, I came across several petitions. I know of one case in which in Camden Town the petitions were in the street at a table, and the person at the table asked those who signed the petition if he was a ratepayer of Camden Town.

1977. *Chairman*]. That was a petition against the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues?—It was a petition against the Coal and Wine Dues. In several cases which came under my notice where the petition was against, the petition was pretty genuine, if I might offer an opinion.

1978. But you have no proof of that at present?—No; I have several more cases with regard to that petition of Sharland's who got it up in the Model Buildings, in Burdett Chambers and Burdett Buildings, Valentine-row, Warwick-street, and other places, which all go to show that that man has been obtaining the signatures under false pretences.

1979. *Viscount Lynton*]. Who have you been employed by for the purpose of the investigation?—By the Anti-Coal Tax Association.

1980. Mr.

16th May 1887.]

Mr. DENT.

[Continued.]

1980. *Mr. Mulholland*.] Among those you inquired about did you find any genuine signatures at all?—I did find two or three, and that is about all, and in those cases they were signed by the wife.

1981. And you stated that Williams did obtain signatures to the Haggerston petition?—Yes.

1982. That is to say, in the Haggerston district he had been visiting from house to house?—No, I cannot say he visited from house to house; because those signatures which are attached to the Haggerston petition which were obtained by him, I believe to be false.

1983. But how did you hear about them?—Simply that he had obtained the signatures to the petition; he was engaged by the Local Conservative Association, so I understand (I rather doubt that) to obtain the signatures.

1984. You did not hear that he had been from house to house; you did not hear that at the houses that he visited?—No.

1985. *Mr. M'Lagan*.] When you were employed by Mr. Lloyd, I suppose you were told the object with which you were to enquire?—I was first of all employed to enquire with regard to the petitions coming from ratepayers, presented on behalf of the ratepayers of the various districts.

1986. For the coal and wine dues?—Yes.

1987. But you were not employed at all to enquire into the petitions against the continuance of the coal and wine dues?—No, I was not.

1988. Have you ever been employed before upon similar work?—Not exactly upon this particular work, but I have had experience in other things.

1989. But not as to the genuineness of signatures?—No.

1990. Did you come into contact with any of the committee whom Mr. Lloyd represented?—No, the only person I have seen upon the committee is Mr. Lloyd himself, I merely obtained my instructions from Mr. Lloyd.

1991. And you know for certain that Mr. Lloyd represented the ratepayers who were opposed to the coal and wine duties?—That I could not say. Simply Mr. Lloyd gave me instructions and I endeavoured to carry them out, I knew that he was secretary to the Anti-Coal Tax Association.

1992. *Chairman*.] When Mr. Lloyd gave you instructions were they in writing or was it verbally?—Verbally chiefly, I simply had one small note from Mr. Lloyd.

1993. Did you make a note of what he said?—I did not.

1994. What, generally, were your instructions?—Simply to enquire into the genuineness of the petitions presented as from the ratepayers of the various districts, to ascertain whether they were genuine or not.

PETITIONS AGAINST.

Mr. CHARLES WILLIAM BARTLETT, called in; sworn, and Examined.

1995. *Chairman*.] You have been employed, have you not, as a canvasser for petitions?—Yes.

1996. What was your way of proceeding?—Standing in the street with a table.

1997. When people came to sign did you ask them how old they were?—No.

1998. You could see how old they were, could you not?—Yes.

1999. Did you let children sign?—No.

2000. What did you do when children came?—I sent them away.

2001. Were you always standing at the table?—Yes.

2002. And the petition was put upon the table, was it, at the corner of the road?—Yes.

2003. And you were in charge of it?—Yes.

2004. Were you there between about 12 and one o'clock?—I was there from about half-past eight or nine in the morning till dark.

0.73.

F 2

2005. A good

18th May 1887.]

MR. BARTLETT.

[Continued.]

2005. A good many boys and girls would be coming out of school, I suppose, about 12 o'clock?—Yes.

2006. And you will undertake to say that no boys or girls signed the petition?—Decidedly.

2007. First of all, which petition are we alluding to, was it about a week ago?—It is about a fortnight ago since I was there.

2008. Were you in the habit of standing there continually with petitions?—No, it is the first time I have ever been upon such a thing.

2009. Do you know what became of the sheets after you had got them signed?—I gave them to the man who employed me.

2010. Who was that?—Mr. Hyde.

2011. Do you know by whom Mr. Hyde was employed?—I do not know that.

2012. You were put there to collect signatures?—Yes, I was.

2013. Do you know how many you got?—I could not exactly say.

2014. How were you paid?—So much per dozen.

2015. How much per dozen?—Two pence per dozen.

2016. And you will undertake to say the petitions were not signed by any boys or girls?—Decidedly not, I did not allow children to sign at all; those were my instructions.

2017. Viscount *Lymington*.] Did you allow women to sign?—Yes.

2018. Mr. *M'Lagan*.] Then it was not limited to ratepayers, you did not enquire whether they were ratepayers?—No.

2019. Viscount *Lymington*.] Did you collect the whole of the signatures to your petition in one day?—I used to have a good many sheets given to me at night, and then a man used to come round in the morning and give me some more; I used generally to get them all filled up.

2020. Did you stand in the same place all the time?—No, I was shifted once to Shoreditch.

2021. Were you shifted about to different districts?—I was allowed to use my own discretion, and move about where I could get most signatures.

2022. You mean to say that you chose the most populated districts?—Yes, where there most people passing in and out.

2023. You were at the corner of the Clerkenwell-road and the Gray's Inn-Road?—Yes.

2024. How long were you there?—Two and a half days.

2025. Was that opposite the Holborn Town Hall?—Yes.

2026. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] You say that you went there between eight and nine in the morning?—Yes, between half-past eight and nine in the morning.

2027. How long did you remain there?—I remained there till the evening.

2028. Were you there the whole day?—Yes, the whole day, harring when I wanted to leave for a moment.

2029. Was that for your meals?—No, I took my meals with me.

2030. You were not away for your meals, were you; how long would you be away?—I was away not more than five minutes at a time.

2031. You are sure you brought your meals with you?—Yes, I am.

2032. Did you never go away in the middle of the day?—No.

2033. Two and a half days you say you were there?—Yes, about two and a half days, I think, I was there.

2034. Did anyone else take your place when you were not there?—There was a shoe-black standing near me, and when I wanted to be away for a few minutes I would ask him to take charge of the table.

2035. I do not want to question the purposes for which you left the table, but only to know whether there might be anybody in charge of the table for any length of time when you were not there?—I never used to leave the table for any longer time than was necessary.

2036. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] The petition was against the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues?—Yes.

2037. Are

16th May 1887.]

Mr. BARTLETT.

[Continued.]

2037. Are you able to say whether any other petition for the same purpose was at the same spot within the last three or four weeks?—I could not say that.

2038. Mr. Mulholland.] You said that no children were allowed to sign?—They were not.

2039. Supposing there were boys and girls of about 18 or 19, would you make any inquiry or would you take their signatures?—I would take their signatures.

2040. If they were grown up?—If I thought they were grown up.

2041. What amount of signatures would you have taken?—One thousand. I could tell you according to the money I earned, I should think I got considerably over 1,000 signatures.

2042. You got something over 100 each day?—Yes, considerably.

2043. Chairman.] Was there nobody else employed upon that spot but yourself?—I believe there was a man employed at the Gray's Inn-road standing outside the Royal Free Hospital.

2044. What sort of a man was that?—I never saw the man.

2045. Mr. McLagan.] Was he in charge of a petition too?—Yes.

2046. Was it a petition against the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues?—I could not say that.

PECKHAM AND DULWICH PETITION, IN FAVOUR.

MR. FREDERICK GEORGE NETHERCLIFT, re-called; and further Examined.

Witness.] THERE are 34 sheets in this petition, and some of them have not got 60 names in them, but I would say that 50 in each sheet I could pick out, certainly; my opinion is that there are very few that are not false.

2047. Viscount Lynton.] Have you made out any list?—I have taken one to 60 first; from 64 to 125 upon the second sheet; there are numbers so far and then they leave off numbering after that. From 124 to 184 upon the third sheet, from 186 to 256; from 257 to 313; from 332 to 391; the first 60 upon the seventh sheet. Then from 394 to 417, the whole of the names are forgeries; then from 418 to 495, and from 496 to 521.

2048. You think that all the signatures upon the eighth sheet are false?—Yes, practically the whole of those that I have mentioned.

2049. You would not undertake to say, that every single one was false?—No, but practically they are.

Thursday, 19th May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Donald Crawford,
Mr. Dalrymple.
Sir Charles Forster.
Mr. William Lowther.

Viscount Lynton.
Mr. M'Lagan.
Mr. Mulholland.

SIR CHARLES FORSTER, IN THE CHAIR.

PETITIONS GENERALLY IN FAVOUR.

Mr. STEPHEN L. SIMEON, sworn; and Examined.

2050. *Chairman.*] You are the Clerk to this Committee?—I am.

2051. What statement do you wish to make to the Committee?—According to the directions which were given to me at the last meeting of the Committee, I wrote to all the signers of the first sheets of the petitions in favour of the continuance of the Coal and Wine Duties, in number there were about 29 of them, and I have received answers from 14, of whom 11 say that they have signed, and three say that they have not; but it seems clear to me that most of the names that stand alone upon the first sheet of the petition are genuine.

2052. *Mr. Lowther.*] Have you seen those persons?—No; I was not directed to summon them, I was simply directed to write and ask them if they had signed certain petitions. This bundle of petitions (*producing the same*) are all in favour of the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues. I took the first signatures from each of those petitions and wrote to each of the signatories as I was directed.

2053. Their signatures might have been forged?—Except that I took the heading of each petition and wrote to each signatory, as follows: "Sir,—I am desired by the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Public Petitions to ask you to be kind enough to inform them whether you signed a petition from a certain place," which I filled up from the head of the petition, "in favour of the continuance of the London Coal and Wine Dues. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, *Stephen L. Simeon*, Clerk to the Committee."

2054. *Viscount Lynton.*] With regard to the petitions for the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues, are there not one or two from the same place. You say that of the 14 signatories from whom you heard, 11 say they signed petitions from certain places in favour of the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues; I want to know if there were more than one petition from one particular locality, whether you stated that in your circular, because a person might have signed one, but might not have signed the other?—That, as a matter of fact, I did not go into. There were several hundreds of petitions, and it would have taken me a good deal more than the Tuesday and Wednesday that were allowed me to go through all the petitions and see that there were not two signatures of the same kind; I did not attempt to do it. As I understood my directions, they were simply to go through the 29 petitions which had been before the Committee, to take the first sheet with the prayer, and ask of each individual whose name was appended to the prayer sheet whether he had signed.

2055. But unless they can identify this particular petition that they have signed (for there have been several hundreds of petitions, as you say), they may have signed one in such a locality, but they may not have signed one of the 29?—I can only give the answer I gave just now, that it would have taken me a great

18th May 1887.]

Mr. SIMON.

[Continued.]

a great deal more time than I had at my disposal to go through all the petitions; I could not possibly have done it in the time, especially with all my other Journal Office work, and it was not work that I should have liked to entrust to anybody else.

2056. *Chairman.*] It was confidential work?—Yes, it was confidential work. On the other hand, it was difficult to fix it; because supposing I had said, "The petition presented upon the 1st of April," that would not have fixed it, because the petition might have been lying at the solicitor's office waiting for a number of other signatures to be tacked on to it; in fact I had no means of fixing the petition except by the heading.

2057. *Mr. Lowther.*] Have you the addressess of the gentlemen who you say signed, or who say that they signed?—Yes, I have.

2058. *Chairman.*] Have you summoned any of those men?—No, I was not directed to do so. One man writes, "In answer to your enquiry about the London Coal and Wine Dues Bill, I signed the petition in favour of the continuance about three weeks ago, I believe, if I remember rightly. I am, Sir, yours truly, Robert W. Marlow." He remembers the facts, therefore I think it quite probable that in his case, as in the others, the signatures in question were those written first, only that they have not mentioned it. I have another letter from Mr. Bussey, the overseer of the parish of Bromley, St. Leonard, written from the vestry clerk's office under official seal and everything of that sort, so there can be no doubt about that. Then there is another man who says he was the first, and that verifies, I think, three out of the 11.

Mr. Lowther.] I think, as the petitions are here, we had better take the opportunity of comparing the signatures to the letters with the signatures to the petitions. The signatures to the 11 petitions to which the signatures to the prayer were acknowledged by letter, were compared and examined by the Committee.

Witness.] I have now produced all the 11. The following persons deny having signed. In answer to my circular asking whether he had signed the petition from Greenwich, Woolwich, and Deptford, I had this letter: "Sir—I have not signed (*sic*) anything. (Signed) C. Andrews, 13, Granville-road, Lee." In answer to the same inquiry, I received the following letter: "Dear Sir—In answer to your inquiry which I received this morning, I beg to say I have not signed any petition in favour of the London Coal and Wine Dues Continuance Bill. (Signed) Archibald Ward, Burgher-road, Homerton." Then a man named Brocklebank writes from No. 107, Lishurn Park, Stoke Newington: "Sir—I beg to assure you I never saw, nor was I ever asked to sign any such petition as that referred to on the other side." Eleven signed altogether, three deny having signed, and there are still 15 answers to come.

PECKHAM AND DULWICH PETITION, IN FAVOUR.

MR. GEORGE FORD, called in; sworn, and Examined.

2059. *Mr. Lowther.*] Which petition did you sign?—The coal petition.

2060. What reference had it to coals?—The reduction of coals, I think it was.

2061. Where did you sign it?—At my place.

2062. Where is your place?—No. 1, Charles-street, Camberwell New-road.

2063. *Chairman.*] What are you?—A coachmaker.

2064. *Mr. Lowther.*] Did somebody bring the petition to you?—That I cannot tell you.

2065. Do you recollect ever in your life signing a petition?—Yes, I have signed petitions; there are a good many come at different times.

0-73.

F 4

2066. Do

18th May 1887.]

Mr. FORD.

[Continued.]

2066. Do you recollect having signed one within the last two months?—No, I do not.

2067. Did you sign one that morning?—No, I do not think so.

2068. Are you continually signing petitions?—Very often I am at a loss to know what the petition is about.

2069. Have you signed one in favour of the Coal and Wine Dues continuance?—That is what I understood the petition was for.

2070. Do you know whether you signed one against the continuance of the coal and wine dues?—I really cannot tell whether I signed against or for it.

2071. Did somebody come to your house with the petition?—Yes.

2072. What time of the day did the person come?—I cannot say.

2073. You have no recollection?—No, I am very often called away about business, and I very often sign and am off again.

2074. *Chairman.*] You very often sign and do not know what you have signed?—Yes, that is so.

2075. *Mr. Leather.*] Do you think you would know your signature?—Yes, I should know my own writing again.

2076. Will you write your own name and address upon that piece of paper? (*handing a piece of paper to the Witness. The Witness did so, and handed it back to the Committee.*)

2077. If you signed a petition, do you think you would have signed it "Camberwell" or "Camberwell-road"?—"Camberwell New-road."

2078. *Viscount Lyvington.*] You say you would put "Camberwell New-road"?—I generally put "Camberwell New-road."

2079. *Chairman.*] Will you now look at the petition (*exhibiting the Witness' alleged signature to him*)?—I did not write that.

2080. You never signed that petition?—No, it is a different "F." altogether.

2081. *Mr. Leather.*] Do you think you would have signed "Camberwell-road," or "Camberwell New-road"?—I should have signed "Camberwell New-road."

Mr. WILLIAM HENRY COOMBS, called again; sworn, and Examined.

2082. *Mr. Leather.*] You had instructions to summon a certain number of people, I believe?—I had instruction to summon 41 people.

2083. Did you summon them?—Sixteen of them I could not find, they were not known at the address given me.

2084. And the remaining?—Six others were known at the addresses, but they had left and gone to other places, and no present address was known.

2085. They were people in very poor circumstances, I suppose?—Yes, they were; six I saw who said they had not signed.

2086. Had not signed any petition?—That is so. Three others were at the right address. I saw the wife of each man, and they asserted that their husbands had not signed; and that has been confirmed in one case by a letter which has arrived this morning from one of those men, saying that he had not signed. Four admitted signing; six others I could obtain no information about. I served the orders upon the wife or servant, but they could tell me nothing about those, as to whether they had signed or not; that completes the 41.

2087. *Viscount Lyvington.*] Then out of the 41 you have only four admitting having signed?—Yes.

2088. *Mr. Donald Crawford.*] With regard to those who had left their houses, did you hear how long they had left?—One house was empty, and I could find no one to give any information; another left in September; another in November; two left in April and one in February.

2089. So that only two had left so late as April?—Yes.

2090. Consequently if the petition was signed in April the other four could not have signed it at that address?—Not at that address.

The public were now admitted.

19th May 1887.

Mr. RICHARD DAVIS ODELL, called in; sworn, and Examined.

2091. *Chairman.*] WHAT are you?—I am a merchant in the City.

2092. Where do you live?—My private address is No. 6, De Crespigny Park, Denmark Hill.

2093. What is your business address?—Fifteen, Lower Thames-street.

2094. *Mr. Lowther.*] Do you recollect having signed any petition for or against the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues?—I signed none whatever.

2095. Was none offered to you for signature?—In the City I had a petition offered to me, but I refused to sign it.

The Witness, in answer to a request, wrote his name and address, and the same were compared with this alleged signature on the petition.

2096. Viscount Lynton.] How are you in the habit of spelling Richard?—“Richard.”

2097. Do you ever sign Richard in short?—I sign “Richard” against cheques.

2098. Do you sign it in full?—Yes.

2099. And how do you spell it?—R-i-c-h-a-r-d.

2100. Will you look at that petition (*handing a petition to the Witness*)?—*The Witness examined the petition.*

2101. Is that your signature?—It is not.

2102. You will swear on your oath that that is not your signature?—It is not.

2103. Have you ever seen this petition?—Never.

2104. You never signed that petition?—I never signed any petition of the kind.

Mr. EDMUND CHARLES MASSEY, called in; sworn, and Examined.

2105. *Chairman.*] WHERE do you reside?—At 130, Peckham Park-road.

2106. Is that your business or private house?—It is my private house.

2107. Have you a business place?—I have no business place.

2108. What are you by trade?—A reporter.

2109. *Mr. Lowther.*] Do you recollect having been asked to sign a petition either for or against the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues?—I do not.

2110. Therefore you did not sign it?—About what time do you refer to, because I have signed petitions in my life?

2111. *Chairman.*] This year?—No.

2112. Will you kindly write your ordinary signature and address?—*The Witness did so.*

2113. You do not think you could have signed a petition and forgotten it?—I feel quite sure of that. (*The Witness' signature was compared with the signature in the petition.*)

2114. Will you just look at this petition (*exhibiting the petition to the Witness*); is that your signature?—It is not.

2115. *Mr. Lowther.*] Did you ever see any handwriting like that; could you trace it at all and see if you recognise anybody's signature; does that remind you of any handwriting you ever saw?—None.

2116. Not of anybody who has ever been with you, or of anybody whom you have employed?—No.

2117. *Chairman.*] Did you authorise any person to sign this petition for you?—No.

19th May 1887.

MR. EDWARD BRYANT, called in ; sworn, and Examined.

2118. *Chairman.*] WHERE do you reside?—At 27, Brunswick-square.

2119. What are you?—I am a clerk.

2120. Did you sign any petition with regard to the Coal and Wine Dues?—I did.

2121. Was it a petition for or against the continuation of the coal and wine dues?—It was a petition for the continuation of the Coal and Wine Dues.

2122. *Viscount Lynton.*] How old are you?—I am nearly 21.

2123. *Chairman.*] Are you 21 next birthday?—Yes, next month.

2124. *Mr. Lowther.*] Where did you sign the petition?—In a public-house.

2125. Did anybody ask you to sign it, or was it merely put there?—A fellow came in with it; brought it in there while I was in there, and asked me to sign, and I signed it.

2126. *Mr. Dalrymple.*] Where was the public-house?—It was the Duke of Cambridge, in Hook's-road.

2127. *Viscount Lynton.*] When you were asked to sign this petition, was there any explanation given to you about the petition you were asked to sign?—He told me it was to keep on the dues on the coal and wines.

2128. What inducement was offered to you to sign the petition?—None; the man only asked me to sign my name, and I put it down.

2129. *Mr. Lowther.*] Have you signed other petitions against the Coal and Wine Dues?—No.

2130. Have you been asked to sign petitions against the Coal and Wine Dues?—No.

2131. *Chairman.*] I take it that you happened to be casually in this public-house?—Yes; I do not very often go there.

2132. Upon this particular day you were there, and a person came in with a petition and asked you to sign it?—Yes, a person came in with the petition and asked me to sign it, and I signed it.

2133. Will you write your ordinary signature, with your address?—(*The Witness did so, and the signature was compared with that on the petition.*)

2134. Will you just look at this petition (*exhibiting the petition to the Witness*); is that your signature?—Yes, that is mine.

2135. You signed it?—Yes.

2136. You did not sign your name in full on that occasion?—Sometimes I sign it in full and sometimes more shortly.

2137. Do you recognise any of the other names on the petition?—(*After examination.*) No, not on that one.

2138. Do you recollect when you signed this petition in what shape it appeared to you?—I believe there were a few in front of mine, but I do not think it was quite so full.

2139. Were there none behind it?—No, there were none behind it.

2140. *Mr. Lowther.*] You did not know the fellow that asked you to sign it; you had never seen him before?—No.

MR. ARTHUR RANNEY BRYANT, called in ; sworn, and Examined.

2141. *Chairman.*] WHAT are you?—I am a clerk.

2142. Where do you live?—I live at 27, Brunswick-square.

2143. What relation are you to the last witness?—I am his brother.

2144. Did you sign any petition with regard to the Coal and Wine Dues?—I did not.

2145. Were you asked to sign any petition with regard to the Coal and Wine Dues?—I was not.

2146. Will

18th May 1887.]

Mr. BRYANT.

[Continued.]

2146. Will you kindly write your usual signature and address?—(*The Witness did so*).

2147. Just look at this petition; is that your signature?—No.

2148. You never signed that?—No.

2149. You never signed the petition at all?—No.

2150. Did you authorise anybody to sign for you?—No, I did not.

2151. Is it your brother's signature?—I do not think so.

2152. Do you think he signed that?—He said he signed that petition himself, and I asked him whether he signed my name, because I did not know how otherwise anybody could possibly have known that I had signed it; he denied having signed my name.

2153. He denied it?—He denied it positively.

2154. Mr. *Lewther*.] You did not sign that petition, you say?—No.

2155. And you did not authorise anybody else to sign for you?—No.

2156. Are you quite sure?—I am quite sure.

MR. WILLIAM HENRY COOMBS, re-called; and further Examined.

2157. Mr. *Dalrymple*.] I WANT to ask you about the witnesses that we have had here to-day; did you see Ford?—I did; he promised to come; he told me that he had not signed.

2158. Did you see Mr. Odell?—No, I did not, I saw Mrs. Odell; she knew nothing about it, she could give me no information.

2159. Then there is a witness named Massey, did you see him?—I did not see Massey.

2160. Did you see anybody representing him, the wife or anybody?—I saw his son, rather a young boy, who could tell me nothing about it.

2161. Did you see the two Bryants?—I saw neither of them; I saw the mother and a younger brother, and the younger brother told me that he believed that one of his brothers had signed, and that he thought the other had not signed.

2162. And you put in that list?—I do. (*The list was handed in.*)

MR. HENRY HILL, called in; sworn, and Examined.

2163. *Chairman*.] WHERE do you reside?—I reside at No. 12, Knatchbull-road; Brunswick-terrace is another name for it.

2164. Where is your business?—In the Southwark Bridge-road, the South London Brewery; I am a partner in the business.

2165. Have you signed any petition in regard to the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues?—No, I believe not.

2166. Were you asked to sign any?—Yes, I believe I was.

2167. But you did not sign it?—I did not.

2168. Will you write your usual signature and address?—(*The Witness did so*).

2169. Will you look at that signature (*exhibiting the petition to the Witness*)?—That is mine.

2170. Mr. *Lewther*.] That is not your signature?—No, it is not.

2171. Did you authorise anybody else to sign it?—Certainly not.

MR. ABRAHAM RUSSELL, called in; sworn, and Examined.

2172. *Chairman*.] WHAT are you by trade?—I am a cheesemonger's assistant.

2173. Where do you reside?—At No. 51, Albany-road, Camberwell.

2174. Have you signed any petition with regard to the continuance of the Coal and Wine Duties?—I have, for the continuance of the Coal and Wine duties.

0.73.

Q 2

2175. Will

19th May 1887.]

MR. RUSSELL.

[Continued.]

2175. Will you kindly look at the petition and tell the Committee if that is your signature?—Yes, that is mine, I think.

2176. You remember signing it?—(*The Witness, after examining the signature, hesitated.*)

2177. Mr. *Lowther.*] Will you kindly write your name upon a piece of paper. (*The Witness did so, and the signature was compared with the alleged signature of the Witness upon the Peckham and Dulwich Petition.*)

2178. Can you make up your mind whether you signed it?—It is not my writing.

2179. First you said it was, and now you say it is not?—Mr. Siggs in the Borough, I believe, signed it before me.

2180. Who is Mr. Siggs?—He is my employer.

2181. He might have been authorized by you to sign it?—No, I signed a petition myself, but not that one, I think.

2182. Mr. *Lowther.*] Do you recollect the circumstances under which you signed?—It was for the continuance of the Coal and Wine Duties.

2183. Was it in the street?—It was in the warehouse.

2184. The man went in and brought it to you?—A man went into Mr. Siggs' office first, and came to me afterwards.

2185. Had the petition any writing to it; did he tell you what it was?—From what I can recollect it was on blue paper.

2186. Was it very large?—It was about that size (*indicating about 20 inches*).

2187. And Mr. Siggs signed before you?—Yes.

2188. And anybody behind you?—There were one or two others signed it as well.

2189. Do you recollect who they were?—One of them was Edward Dine.

2190. He is in the same establishment with you, is he?—Yes.

2191. And you do not know what became of the sheets after you had signed them?—No, the man took the sheet away with him.

2192. And you never heard anything more of it?—I never heard anything more of it.

2193. Have you quite made up your mind whether that is or is not your writing?—That is not my writing.

2194. *Chairman.*] You did sign a petition, but that is not your signature?—That is not my signature.

THOMAS LENNOX, called in; sworn, and Examined.

2195. *Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At No. 39, Arthur-street, Old Kent-road.

2196. What are you by trade?—A labourer.

2197. Did you sign any petition with regard to the Coal and Wine Duties?—No.

2198. Do you know whether your address would be in the London Directory?—I do not know.

2199. How long have you lived where you are now?—Close handy three years.

2200. Mr. *Dalrymple.*] Is that road ever described as anything else?—In the notice I had to attend here it was described as "Arthur-street, Peckham."

2201. But that is not right, is it?—It is not exactly right; but Arthur-street runs out of the Old Kent-road, which runs into Peckham.

The Witness, upon request, signed his name and address, and the same was compared with his alleged signature upon the petition.

2202. You never do put your address, do you?—No.

2203. Will you just look at that (*handing the petition to the Witness*); is that your signature?—No.

2204. Did you sign this petition?—No.

2205. Did you authorise anybody to sign it for you?—No.

19th May 1887.

ALFRED HENRY HUNNEX, called in ; sworn, and Examined.

2206. *Chairman.*] What are you ?—A basket-maker.

2207. Where do you live ?—No. 266, Commercial-road, Peckham.

2208. Did you sign any petition upon this question ?—Yes.

2209. For or against the Coal and Wine Duties ?—It was for the continuation of the Coal and Wine Duties.

2210. Will you just write down your name and address ?—(*The Witness did so.*)2211. *Mr. Loewther.*] Do you know under what conditions you signed it ; where was the petition given to you ?—In a public-house, a beer shop.2212. *Chairman.*] You happened to be, I suppose, at this public-house casually, and the man came across you ?—Yes ; I happened to go in with a friend of mine to have a glass of ale, and a man was in there with the petition ; he asked me if I would sign it, and I said I would.2213. Will you look at the petition (*exhibiting the petition to the Witness*) ; is that your signature ?—That is my signature.

2214. Do you know the signature above it, or near it ?—There is one young man, of the name of Hallett, signed it just above me or below me, or, at all events, at the same time as I did. I do not know his other name.

2215. Where does he live ?—He lives in the Burdett-road, Peckham.

The Committee-room was cleared.

MR. CARLTON ROBERTS, re-called.

2216. *Chairman.*] We understand that you have something to say to the Committee ; we are prepared to hear your statement, but first let me tell you that we think this inquiry has now taken a very serious turn. There is now, no doubt, evidence of a complete system of forgery and of fictitious signatures ; and without saying more, we think we may fairly hold you responsible to a certain extent. Therefore, if you have anything to say, you may say it, but we do not ask you to do so, because no man is bound to criminate himself.—It is not that I am afraid of doing that ; I have nothing to conceal. As I have said before, I feel very deeply indeed the position in which I am placed ; I can only repeat that I have, personally, not had knowledge of any one single man who has been engaged in the matter. I have trusted entirely to others, and in doing so I have placed myself in the unfortunate position that I have. I have stated before, and I reiterate now, in the most positive manner, that if I had had the slightest knowledge that anything in any way whatever of a fraudulent character was being carried on, I should never have been a party to it ; and if it had been necessary, as far as character is concerned, I could bring overwhelming evidence to prove that.

2217. But people may be responsible for carelessness, you know ?—Yes, quite so. I quite understand that ; and if you were to ask me if I am responsible carelessly, I should admit it, but if you were to ask me if I am responsible fraudulently, I should deny it indignantly, and should ask the Committee to take that view.

2218. We do not ask you for any admission on your part, but it is my duty to give you this friendly caution.—I am much obliged to the Committee. Then with regard to Sharland, your summoning officer said to me just now outside, "Do you know where Sharland is ?" Now I do not know where Sharland is, although I think it quite probable I might be able to find him very shortly, and I freely volunteer to give the Committee what information I have upon the matter.

2219. Do you think you could find him by Friday or Monday ?—For myself I could not say where he lives. He was employed by Hallett ; and I think that by letting Hallett know that Sharland was wanted, in fact I am sure, Hallett

19th May 1887.]

Mr. ROBERTS.

[Continued.]

would do his very best to have Sharland here, and I should of course urge it upon him to do so; but even then I could not pledge myself to it, I am only anxious to do everything I can to facilitate the requirements of the Committee. If I send the address to this House, may I ask if you will issue an order for Sharland to appear, because how am I to get him here? If I inform Mr. Simeon where he can be found, would that be sufficient; because I am afraid that my simply sending for him would not get him here.

Chairman.] We will take such steps as may be necessary to call upon him to appear.

2220. *Mr. Mulholland.*] You have handed in a list of the canvassers engaged to the Committee, and in that list you have Sharland's address as 21, Villiers-street, Walworth; is that his right address?—Yes, I believe so; that is the address furnished to me.

2221. I do not know whether the Committee ordered him to be summoned from there or from No. 4, Renfrew-road?—That probably is the better address, for all I know he is living there now.

Monday, 23rd May 1887.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Donald Crawford.
Sir Charles Forster.
Mr. William Lowther.
Viscount Lymington.

Mr. Mulholland.
Mr. Henry Toulmache.
Colonel Bridgeman.

SIR CHARLES FORSTER, IN THE CHAIR.

Mr. STEPHEN L. SIMEON, re-called; and further Examined.

2222. *Chairman.*] HAVE you had any further replies to the 29 circulars you sent out, of which, upon the last occasion, you accounted for a few?—Four letters have been returned through the Dead Letter Office as “Not known,” “Empty houses,” and so on; six people acknowledge having signed; four deny having signed; and there are still five letters not answered. Those, with those I produced upon the previous occasion, account for the 29 circulars that I sent out.

Mr. ABDIEL GEORGE SHARLAND, sworn; and Examined.

2223. *Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—21, Amelia-street, Walworth.

2224. What are you?—A commercial traveller.

2225. Were you employed in the matter of these petitions?—I was.

2226. Upon what petitions were you employed?—I have had several petitions for the House.

2227. You were employed upon those petitions?—I was.

2228. It is right that I should caution you that you are not obliged to say anything that will criminate yourself; and anything you do say will be taken down?—I am quite aware of that.

2229. Will you name some of the petitions upon which you were employed, with regard to the question of the coal and wine dues?—Pimlico-buildings, Sutherland-street.

2230. Had you anything to do with the Haggerston petition?—No.

2231. What other petition had you to do with?—Westminster, and various others, I should say towards Chelsea; I cannot exactly remember.

2232. Were they in the Chelsea district?—Yes, they were partly there.

2233. By whom were you employed?—By Mr. Hallett.

2234. At what remuneration?—Four shillings and sixpence per hundred; I may say that I received a little for expenses, nominally, not much.

2235. Were you paid anything per week?—Nothing.

2236. Do you know Bedmead?—No.

2237. Have you never seen him?—Not to my knowledge; I know no one of that name.

2238. You had no communication with him?—No, none whatever.

2239. Will you tell the Committee your mode of getting signatures; did you go from house to house, or how?—Mine were chiefly Peabody blocks.

2240. Now, I am going to ask you another question, and you need not answer the question unless you like; did you put down any name without the authority

23rd May 1887.]

Mr. SHARLAND.

[Continued.]

of the parties?—Only where they could not write; they put down their own crosses to their names, and I attested them afterwards.

2241. Mr. *Lowther*.] You attested the signatures with your own name?—Yes; and my sheets will prove that.

2242. *Chairman*.] Were the signatures attested afterwards?—At the time when they put their cross.

2243. You say you had a certain sum for expenses?—It was only towards postage and telegrams; it was nothing.

2244. Mr. *Lowther*.] Your address has been given as Renfrew-road, Kennington?—That is my brother's; there is some mistake in that.

2245. And you now live where?—21, Amelia-street, Walworth.

2246. Have you been in the employment of Mr. Scudamore?—No.

2247. Is that your brother?—My brother was formerly his clerk some years ago; that is how the mistake arises; they have mistaken my brother for me.

2248. Has your brother also been employed in getting up petitions?—He has done about 100 or 200.

2249. Mr. *Tollmaché*.] Do you mean petitions or signatures?—Getting signatures.

2250. Mr. *Lowther*.] What was your own mode of getting signatures?—I went from house to house, and canvassed for the continuance of the coal and wine dues.

2251. And you took the sheets with you?—Decidedly.

2252. And you were employed by Mr. Hallett?—Yes.

2253. Did Mr. Hallett give you any instructions as to how the signatures were to be procured?—Yes; he told me to get every one genuine.

2254. Did you mention at all the subject of closing public-houses when you went to get signatures?—No, I have not had any petition of that kind for the last five or six years. I had one five years ago, but not this year.

2255. By whom were you employed then?—By the Licensed Victuallers' Protection Society. Mr. Ernest Norfolk, the Secretary, employed me.

2256. And you saw the people always write the names themselves?—Some; of course, I could not step into their private rooms, and go inside and see them put down their names, because they would not allow me to do such a thing, so I cannot say that I saw every person sign.

2257. Did you ever ask any person to sign in the street?—No.

2258. A man going inside a house, would you stop him and ask him to sign?—Yes; if he lived there and I saw him going in at the door, I should ask him if he would sign the petition, and if he was willing, I presume that I should take it.

2259. You know Mr. Roberts, do you not?—I have seen Mr. Roberts two or three years ago upon a Hackney petition, but not since.

2260. You were not employed by him to get signatures, were you?—No.

2261. Having got the signatures, what did you do with them?—I gave them to Mr. Hallett, or sent them on by the parcels post, or in some other way.

2262. You are a commercial traveller?—I represent Messrs. Beil and Co., 83, Knight-riding-street, City.

2263. Mr. *Tollmaché*.] Is your brother's name John?—Yes.

2264. And he lives at No. 4, Renfrew-road, does he?—No; he lives at my address; that is a mistake; someone has given that address because he is a friend of Mr. Scudamore's, who is in the legal profession.

2265. Is your brother here?—No.

2266. *Chairman*.] Is Mr. Roberts here?—I do not know. I have not seen him.

The Committee Room was cleared.

23rd May 1887.

Mr. JOHN WALTER HALLETT, re-called; and further Examined.

2267. *Chairman.*] THERE seems some confusion as to these two brothers; which is the one responsible to you?—This is the one, the one who came in here just now.

2268. He was responsible to you?—Yes, he was responsible to me; he was virtually the man whom I employed, and if his brother, as he says, got 100 or 200 signatures, he (the last witness) returned them to me as signatures which had himself obtained.

2269. This is the man you paid?—Yes, this is the man. When the Committee said they wanted him, and he could not be traced, I found him out; I went over on Friday and wrote to Mr. Simeon, so that he should be produced.

2270. Mr. Tollemache.] Could you tell the Committee what you paid this man?—I could not at all.

2271. You could not tell whether he sent in any number?—No.

2272. You could not say whether he sent in 750 or 1,500?—Not committing myself to numbers, I should think he brought in 14,000 pretty well; I should think so, not committing myself to any number, but to give a broad margin, I should think between 11,000 and 14,000. By the data which I have at home I should think it would be between 11,000 and 14,000.

2273. Viscount Lynton.] The number would certainly not be below 11,000, at all events;—I should think not, but it is quite impossible for me to tax my memory at all closely.

2274. Mr. Tollemache.] Did you take a receipt from your canvassers?—Sometimes I would take a receipt. Sometimes one would bring in a 100 or 200 signatures, these men would all be in a very impecunious state, and having glanced at the signatures cursorily to see that the numbers were correct, then I would give them their money. You do not very often take a receipt for a small payment of 10s. or anything of that sort. I may say I think this man seemed to court inquiry in the matter; when I found him he seemed perfectly willing to come up; he seemed quite *bond fide* in the matter.

2275. *Chairman.*] You paid him, I think, 4s. 6d. per 100?—Yes, I did; that is what I paid him, and sometimes I would pay him a shilling or so for his expenses.

2276. For postage and that sort of thing?—Yes; because sometimes he had sent me up 1,000. This is the man that I referred to when I mentioned that I had a man in Walworth who would go to the model lodging-houses; that was his *modus operandi*.

2277. What was his *modus operandi*?—I think in my evidence I said that he would go to a model lodging-house, and would go to the men in charge and say, "I will give you a glass of beer if you will go round and get these men to sign."

2278. Mr. Lowther.] I think you said you had written to him, and that the letter was returned to you 'not known'?—I think that referred to the man Aimes.

2279. Will you look at Question No. 574?—"Mr. Aimes, 170, Union-street, Borough, but I find this man has since gone away; I have written him and the letter was returned 'Not known.' Mr. Sharland, 21, Amelia-street, Walworth." That applies to a Mr. Aimes, 170, Union-street. This man originally had another address.

2280. Do you know this man's initials?—I know so far, from having employed him, that his name is A. G.

2281. Do you know what the other one's name is?—I could not tell you; when I say I could not tell you, I was standing there, and I heard him say his brother's name was "J.;" that is all I know; from my own knowledge I know nothing of the man's name.

23rd May 1887.]

MR. HALLETT.

[Continued.]

2282. Do you know this man's signature, "Abdiel, G."?—Yes, thoroughly. I may tell you how I know it: I took the precaution when he sent me in a number of signatures to take a receipt, which he signed "A. G. Sharland," and I recollect looking through his sheets, as I always did when I knew a man's signature, to see if I could see anything at all corresponding to it.

2283. Did you see the sheets when they came up?—Yes.

2284. Do you recollect seeing his name to any crosses that had been signed?—I recollect seeing his name attached to some of the sheets which have not been sent in to the House; some sheets that he passed through my hands witnessed, but who they were witnessed by I could not tell you.

2285. Not witnessed by him?—No.

2286. Would you have remarked it if they had been witnessed by him?—I do not know that I should.

2287. Would it have been legal?—I do not know that it would not have been. I did not know until something was mentioned that it was legal for a man to have his name witnessed by the man who took his signature, until I found out afterwards that it was so.

2288. Mr. Tollemache.] Would it be possible for you to furnish the receipts you got from this man, and any information as to the number of signatures you paid him for?—I am afraid I could not oblige the Committee by giving them the receipt he gave me. By-the-by, I believe I have the man's signature with me (*handing in a note signed by A. G. Sharland*). There was one heading that was sent in signed by one of the foremen of Messrs Doulton and Sons' pottery works; a foreman or an employé in rather higher position there. What impressed it upon my mind was that he said it took him a little longer time to obtain that signature than others, so I think I gave him a sixpence or something of that sort.

2289. Did you pay the brother for many signatures?—I have not paid the brother, John Sharland, for any signatures. If the brother obtained any he was paid by the witness who has just been before you, who never told me that his brother obtained any signatures.

2290. Mr. Donald Crawford.] What did you know about this man before?—Nothing whatever; it was the first time I ever saw him.

2291. How did you come to employ him at the time?—He came from the West Southwark Conservative Club, and said he heard I was in want of somebody to go round and get signatures, and that he was thoroughly well recommended by the secretary of the club, Mr. Gillman, a man of whom I had known something, having met him at a meeting; and I said, "Who else do you know?" and he said, "Mr. Ernest Norfolk;" and he told me the kind of business he had been engaged in for Mr. Norfolk.

2292. Did you get any written recommendation?—No, I did not, but I saw Mr. Gillman the day before, and the man brought his ticket of membership of the club; because they have tickets of membership in these small clubs, and I thought that the mention of Mr. Gillman's and Mr. Norfolk's names was sufficient to enable me to employ the man.

The public were again admitted.

MR. ABDIEL GEORGE SHARLAND, called in; and further Examined.

2293. Viscount Lynton.] I UNDERSTAND you have been employed by Mr. Hallett to collect some signatures?—Yes, that is right.

2294. Have you collected many?—I could not say as to the amount.

2295. Why cannot you tell the number?—Because I had two petitions besides this one; that is to say, two other petitions besides this to the House of Commons.

2296. But how were you paid?—The same as I have been paid upon this.

2297. Chairman.] Were they petitions upon another subject?—Yes.

2298. Viscount

23rd May 1887.]

Mr. SHEARLAND.

[Continued.]

2298. Viscount *Lynnington*.] And did Mr. Hallett pay you, or was it done as a piece of gratuitous work upon your part?—I was paid 4 s. 6 d. a hundred for doing it.

2299. Then you must have some idea of the number of signatures you obtained if you were paid 4 s. 6 d. a hundred; what did you receive from Mr. Hallett?—I have not kept any account.

2300. When were you paid by Mr. Hallett?—Sometimes I was paid in the middle of the week, and sometimes I was paid on the Saturday.

2301. But how long ago?—The last work I did for Mr. Hallett was just before Easter, or just after Easter.

2302. Were you paid by Mr. Hallett before Easter, or after Easter?—Before Easter.

2303. You must surely remember approximately what money you received; it is ridiculous to let the Committee suppose that you cannot remember what money you received from Mr. Hallett?—It is impossible to say; I cannot remember.

2304. You may not choose to say?—No, I would be willing to say if I could, but I do not remember; I have not come here to tell stories, I have come here to tell the truth.

2305. How many petitions did you get up for the continuance of the coal and wine duties?—Do you mean headings, by that? In what districts?

2306. I want to know how many petitions you collected?—Sometimes I have taken as many as, I daresay, 130 or 140 signatures a day; it is according to what time I have given to it.

2307. Then what was your principle of collecting the signatures?—It was a house to house canvass.

2308. Did you collect 130 or 140 on one sheet of paper?—No; there were about 30 names upon each sheet attached; it was brief paper.

2309. After you had collected those 30 or 40 names upon a piece of paper, did you send in the names just as they were upon a sheet of paper to Mr. Hallett?—I sent them in the same as I received them.

2310. And about how many sheets of this sort would you collect in a day?—I cannot recollect; sometimes I may have done 140 signatures, or perhaps on another occasion I may have done more. I have other business that I do; I have another firm that I represent in the City, and I have to look to them to get my living during the year, and not to petitions.

2311. You say you are employed by a firm besides?—Yes.

2312. You do this work in addition to your ordinary employment out of hours?—I do it at the same time sometimes; I took them in both together; I combined them both together.

2313. What is your regular business?—It is amongst the grocers and oilmen.

2314. You are a traveller, then, for a firm?—Yes.

2315. Did you collect many signatures in the evening between eight and 11, or during the daytime?—Some times I would work till 10 o'clock at night, and sometimes I would leave off at six in the evening; it would depend upon what sort of journey I was on; sometimes, if I went to blocks, which I worked mostly, I would find more men at home in the evening, and I would obtain more work by going in the evening; there is an instance at Westminster in some blocks I have worked there.

2316. Did you collect those signatures there?—Yes.

2317. Whom did you collect there from?—From the tenants of the Peabody Buildings themselves.

2318. Do you know any of the people personally residing there?—Yes; the superintendent signed one; he gave me permission.

2319. What is his name?—I do not know his name; he gave me permission to go over the buildings afterwards; he was the first to head the petition, and I think I obtained about 200 or 300, as far as I remember, in that block of buildings alone.

2320. You say the superintendent of Peabody's Buildings signed the petition himself?—He gave me permission.

o.73.

B 2

2321. But

23rd May 1887.]

Mr. SHARLAND.

[Continued.]

2321. But did he sign it himself, or give you permission to collect signatures only?—He signed it himself.

2322. Did you collect any signatures in any public-houses?—Yes, I may have got one or two there. I cannot remember; I may have got the landlord to sign. I cannot remember. I have been to so many places.

2323. But did you go to any public-house at all; you remember so distinctly having gone to the Peabody Buildings; surely your memory would also serve you to remember whether you went to any public-house; did you go to any public-houses?—Not upon that petition, I think.

2324. *Chairman.*] What do you mean by "that petition"?—Not upon that particular petition.

2325. Will you explain what you mean by that?—Upon that petition I do not think there was any one signature got in a public-house.

2326. *Viscount Lyvington.*] I want to ask you, not upon that particular petition, but whether you collected any signatures in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties in public-houses?—I think not.

2327. Be careful what you say; you did not collect any signature in any public-house in favour of the coal and wine dues?—Not myself, I did not; I do not think I did.

2328. From what district did you get most signatures?—I think Westminster, and the Division that Lord Algeonon Percy represented, St. George's, Hanover-square.

2329. *Chairman.*] That is the district now represented by Mr. Goschen?—Yes, I expect it is.

2330. *Viscount Lyvington.*] Then what other model dwelling-houses did you canvass besides the Peabody Buildings close here in Westminster?—The Albert, nearly opposite the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria-street, Westminster.

2331. Did you go anywhere across the river, to Shaftesbury Park, and canvass any of those houses in that district?—Yes; but I do not think I did on this petition; I have canvassed there, but not upon this petition.

2332. Upon what petition did you canvass?—I canvassed on the Pure Beer Bill.

2333. You canvassed Shaftesbury Park?—Wandsworth-road, Lavender-hill, I presume you mean.

2334. The Shaftesbury Park Estate; it is an estate just off Battersea Park?—Lavender-hill, Wandsworth; but not upon this petition; I do not think there were any names got there for this petition.

2335. You collected most of the signatures for that petition from Lambeth and Westminster?—Yes, I expect I did, nearly all. I can tell my own writing because there has been someone else at work besides me.

2336. How could you tell; could you identify your sheets upon the petition, if they were shown to you?—Yes, I could identify my own.

2337. Those which you collected yourself?—Yes, certainly. (*The petition from Lambeth and Westminster is exhibited to the Witness.*)

2338. *Mr. Tollemache.*] Did you employ your brother, by the way?—Yes, he was employed by me. Those (*pointing to a row of "dittoes"*) are not mine.

2339. Those would probably be supplied by your brother?—That (*pointing to a sheet*) is one of mine.

2340. *Viscount Lyvington.*] You did not employ anybody else to collect signatures with you?—Yes, I did.

2341. You did?—Yes.

2342. You were paid so much a hundred?—Yes.

2343. And you employed somebody else to help you?—Yes.

2344. What did you give them?—I gave them 3 s. a hundred.

2345. Who were the people whom you employed?—I employed about five or six men.

2346. *Chairman.*]

23rd May 1887.]

Mr. SHARLAND.

[Continued.]

2346. *Chairman.*] I think you said you employed your brother?—Yes, but my brother only had about 200 signatures.

2347. But he was employed by you, and you paid him?—Yes.

2348. *Mr. Louth.*] You employed five or six, you say?—Yes, their names are on the sheets.

2349. *Viscount Lyvington.*] Can you remember the names?—Yes.

2350. Will you give them to the Committee?—There was a man named Clark.

2351. Where does he live, and what is his description?—I have not their addresses with me, but I can produce that information within about 48 hours. I cannot do it before, because I shall have a bother to find them.

2352. What is his description?—He is a clerk.

2353. In whose office?—He is out of employment.

2354. And who is the next one; you say there are five or six?—My brother.

2355. Is he in employment now?—He is a solicitor's clerk out of employment.

2356. Who else?—A man named Lewis.

2357. What is he?—He has been a stockbroker's clerk, I believe.

2358. He is out of employment, is he not?—Yes, at the present time.

2359. Who else?—A man named Dixon.

2360. *Chairman.*] Do you know his Christian name?—Horace Dixon, I think.

2361. *Viscount Lyvington.*] Do you know his address?—I know it is somewhere at Peckham; I have their addresses. I can soon produce the men themselves, if it comes to that.

2362. What business is he; has he got any business?—He is one of the collectors for Singer's, the sewing-machine people.

2363. And he is out of employment?—Yes; these men would not have taken the work if they had not been out of employment.

2364. There is another one; who else?—There is another man named Lewis again; another Lewis; there were two Lewises.

2365. Is that all that you employed?—Yes; but I cannot say what they may have done in employing anyone else; of course, I know nothing whatever about that.

2366. They used to collect sheets, and send them to you?—Yes, they used to bring them in to me.

2367. How did you come to know the men; did they come to hear that you were collecting signatures, and come to you, or how was it?—I have been a commercial man on the road now for 18 or 19 years, and I know a lot of people out of doors. I have met them on elections, and somehow or other; some of those people who are out of employment have held very good positions in life.

2368. What were your instructions to them?—To obtain signatures for the coal and wine dues, and to bring me in genuine signatures.

2369. Was that all you said to them?—Yes, that is all I said to them.

2370. Upon the question of the coal and wine dues, did you get up many of your petitions from ratepayers?—No, I cannot say that I did, because I could not tell whether they were ratepayers, or whether they were not ratepayers, because I had not the register of each district to know whether they had a vote or not.

2371. When they brought you in the sheets, did you look at the sheets and investigate them?—I cannot say that I have looked at all of them, but I have looked at some; in fact, I have taken a day myself at times, and gone with some of the men. I had one of the men with me, and saw that the work was done properly. I watched myself to see that there was nothing done wrong.

0.73.

B 3

2372. You

23rd May 1887.]

Mr. SHARLAND.

[Continued.]

2372. You mean you went with the man to whom you paid 3 s. ?—Some of the men of whom I have given you the names I have gone round with, one one day, and one another day.

2373. But were not you collecting at the same time ?—Yes; but I could see what was being done, because I had been to the buildings with them; there is one door here, and another door there, close by each other, so that you can hear what is said.

2374. Mr. *Donald Crawford*.] You said that you were engaged upon two other petitions at the same time as this one ?—Yes.

2375. What were those ?—The Pure Beer Bill, and against Sir John Lubbock's Bill for closing the shops.

2376. Were you employed by Mr. Hallett for those petitions also ?—No; Mr. Hallett had nothing whatever to do with them.

2377. You gave that as the reason for not being able to tell the honourable Member next me how much you were paid; but if you were not employed by the same person I do not see what that has got to do with it; what amount were you paid altogether ?—It might be 12 l., or it might be 15 l.; it is between one and the other, but I cannot give the amount exactly, because I have not kept an account; it may be between 12 l. and 15 l.; I should not like to say it was more than 15 l., and I should not like to say it was less than 12 l.

2378. You say the names of the men you employed were on the sheets which they got; do you mean they were written on the back to identify the sheets ?—No; as witnesses where the person could not write; to attest the signature.

2379. Was that done in each case ?—Yes, as far as I know; the sheets are there.

2380. The Committee have seen a great many sheets in which no name of that kind occurs, but you say that in all these sheets there are instances of that kind ?—There may be some sheets upon which there was not a person who could not write his own name; and, of course, that would not want attesting; they are supposed to be all in different handwritings.

2381. I want to ask you if you had anything to do with collecting the signatures that I shall mention just now. Stop me when I mention a petition with which you had anything to do: Bromley-by-Bow, Dalston, and Stoke Newington, London, City, East London, North Hackney, Lower Clapton, Haggerston, West Ham, Ilford, Greenwich, St. Pancras, Deptford, Southwark; did you collect any of those ?—I think there may be a few in Southwark, but I do not think there are many.

2382. Not in any of the other districts ?—Not in any of the other districts.

2383. Camberwell, Brixton, Peckham, and Homerton ?—No.

2384. Dulwich and Peckham, Notting Hill, Stepney and Limehouse: not in any of those ?—No.

2385. Bloomsbury, Pentonville, Bethnal Green, Islington; none of those ?—No.

2386. Mr. *Mulholland*.] You said you were collecting signatures to two other petitions at the same time ?—Yes.

2387. Did you get signatures to them at the same visit; did you go to the house and get signatures to all of them at the same time ?—No.

2388. How did you proceed ?—I may have worked one of them myself, and there have been others got in the North of London.

2389. You mean you did not get them in the same district ?—That is quite right, and they would not appear with those at all.

2390. And you employed some five or six men in getting signatures for the other petitions ?—Yes.

2391. Mr. *Lowther*.] When you got petitions against Sir John Lubbock's Bill,

23rd May 1887.]

Mr. SHARLAND.

[*Continued.*]

Bill, who employed you?—I was employed by a gentleman over the water of the name of Robinson.

2392. What was he?—A tradesman.

2393. Was he an election agent?—No, he was nothing of that kind.

2394. He was a tradesman?—Yes.

2395. In a large business?—Yes, a very large business.

2396. In what line?—He is a pork butcher.

LIST OF APPENDIX.

Papers handed in by the Chairman :

PAGE

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1.—Letter from Mr. Bidmond to the Speaker of the House of Commons | - | - | - | 137 |
| 2.—Statement by Mr. Carlton Roberts, made 27th April 1887 | - | - | - | 137 |
| 3.—Statement by Mr. Joshua Walter Halliell | - | - | - | 138 |
| 4.—Evidence of Mr. Reginald Bidmond, 294, Dalston-lane, Hackney, of no occupation,
aged 23 | - | - | - | 138 |

A P P E N D I X.

PAPERS handed in by the *Chairman*.

— 1. —

LETTER from Mr. *Bidmead* to the Speaker of the House of Commons.294, Dalston-lane, Hackney,
28 April 1887.

Sir,

My attention has been called to the inquiry now before the House of Commons in relation to the petition of ratepayers of Haggerston, and it is with great shame and sorrow that I feel it my duty to state that such petition was one entirely concocted by me, and in express opposition to the instructions of Mr. Hallett who employed me to collect signatures of ratepayers and others in the neighbourhood who were in favour of the continuance of the Duties. I was and am in great poverty, having been out of employment for many months, and without considering the grave offence I was committing was induced by my necessity to commit the fraud upon the House of Commons and my employer.

The only reparation I can offer is to make this true statement of the facts.

Trusting that my humble sincere apology may be accepted, I throw myself upon the mercy of yourself and the House of Commons.

The Right Honourable The Speaker
of the House of Commons.

I am, &c.
(signed) *R. Bidmead*.

— 2. —

STATEMENT by Mr. *Carlton Roberts*, made 27th April 1887.

In the Matter of a Petition from Ratepayers of Haggerston.

STATEMENT of Facts by Mr. *Carlton Roberts*, of 6, Town Hall Buildings, Mare-street, Hackney, in the County of Middlesex, Printer.

UNDERSTANDING that signatures were required from ratepayers of the metropolis in favour of a continuance of the Coal and Wine Duties, I employed John Walter Hallett, of 3, Chatham-place, Hackney, Political Agent, to procure such signatures, I undertaking to reimburse him any payments out of pocket, and for his own trouble I agreed to pay him a weekly salary.

I gave him particular instructions that every signature should be a genuine signature, and from time to time on his returning the petitions to me I have closely questioned him as to the genuineness of the various signatures, and the said John Walter Hallett has always assured me that the said signatures were *good, false* ones and in accordance with my instructions.

I am informed by the said John Walter Hallett that he engaged the services of Reginald Bidmead, of No. 294, Dalston-lane, Hackney, in the county of Middlesex, of no occupation, to collect or procure signatures to a petition in favour of the said Duties, but I do not know of my own personal knowledge how the said Reginald Bidmead procured the said signatures or whether they are genuine or otherwise.

The said John Walter Hallett brought me the petition above named, and I in due course forwarded the same to Lord Claud Hamilton, M.P., in good faith, his Lordship having once spoken at a political meeting convened at my instance.

— 3. —

STATEMENT by Mr. John Walter Hallett.

In the Matter of a Petition from Ratepayers of Haggerston.

STATEMENT of Facts by Mr. John Walter Hallett, of 3, Chatham-place, Hackney, Political Agent, aged 35.

HAVE been for the past three years engaged as a political agent.

I was employed by Mr. Carlton Roberts at a weekly salary of 3*l.* Mr. Roberts instructed me to obtain signatures to petitions to Parliament in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill. He especially instructed me to obtain only *bonâ fide* signatures.

I engaged Reginald Bidmead, whom I have known for 2½ years, on or about the 16th March 1887, to procure signatures to a petition. Bidmead had been strongly recommended to me as a man of character and respectability.

My instructions to Bidmead were to procure signatures from house to house.

When the petition was brought back to me I went through the signatures with Bidmead, one by one, and asked whether they were genuine.

He answered me that every signature was genuine. About a week since (*viz.*, on or about the 19th April 1887) I was informed by Mr. Carlton Roberts there was a question as to the genuineness of the petition. Immediately I sought Bidmead and had an interview with him. This was on Wednesday the 20th day of April 1887. I told Bidmead I had heard there was something wrong with the Haggerston petition which he had sent in, its genuineness being questioned.

He said I could rely that every signature that was on the Haggerston sheets was genuine, and had been collected by himself and a friend. He subsequently wrote me the letter of 20th April (*produced*).

Letter, Bidmead to Hallett.

When I first saw Bidmead and engaged him on the 16th March, I agreed to pay him 4*s.* per hundred for the signatures. I am prepared to swear that this is the usual price for obtaining genuine *bonâ fide* signatures to such petitions.

I was not satisfied with Bidmead's explanation, and some further inquiries being made of me I went to the house of Mr. Clarke, of the "Browlow Arms," and from information there received I came to the conclusion that his signature was fabricated. I further questioned him as to the genuineness of the remainder of the signatures, when he made a confession that a large number of the same had been fabricated.

— 4. —

EVIDENCE of Mr. Reginald Bidmead, 284, Dalston-lane, Hackney, of no Occupation, aged 23.

WAS engaged on 16th March 1887 to obtain signatures to petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties, by Mr. Hallett. He told me to get as many signatures as possible to the petitions. He said let them be *bonâ fide*. I agreed to undertake the work; Mr. Hallett was to pay me 4*s.* per hundred signatures.

I know Mr. Frederick Clarke, whose name is at the head of the petition. It is not his signature; I signed his name. I also signed about 200 other names in a disguised hand. I took the names from a Directory; I wrote the names at home. I never obtained one single genuine signature. I returned the petition to Mr. Hallett. He questioned me as to the genuineness of the signatures, going through the petition sheet by sheet. I said they were genuine.

On the 20th April (Wednesday) I again saw Mr. Hallett, who informed me that doubts had been raised as to the genuineness of the Haggerston petition. I again asserted to Mr. Hallett that the signatures were genuine, and on the same day I wrote to him the letter (*produced*) of the 20th April.

I excuse myself for having been guilty of the above transaction on the ground that I was very pushed for money. Being out of employ and earning nothing, I was anxious to settle my lodgings bill.

I did not give a moment's reflection upon the enormity of the offence I was committing. I did not know the penal consequences.

(signed) Reginald Bidmead.

27 April 1887.

I N D E X.

[N.B.—In this Index the Figures following the Names of the Witnesses, and those in the Analysis of Evidence of each Witness, refer to the Questions in the Evidence; the Figures following App. refer to the Pages in the Appendix; and the Numerals following Rep. to the Pages in the Report.]

A.

AGENTS AND SUB-AGENTS (PETITIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COAL AND WINE DUTIES):

Employment of witness, who is a political agent, by Mr. Carlton Roberts, to obtain signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the Coal and Wine Dues, *Hallett* 454-456. 477—Remuneration of witness at the rate of three guineas a week, irrespective of his payments to canvassers, *ib.* 508. 577-581. 608-615.

Witness, who is a printer at Hackney, and acts as a political agent, was employed by Mr. Robert Wraeg to procure signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, *Roberts* 700-708—List of political agents employed by witness to obtain signatures through others: belief that he has never paid any one who actually collected a signature, *ib.* 709-713—Opinion that three small petitions, got up by sub-agents, named Bull, Remington, and Wilder, were not questioned, *ib.* 710. 764. 765.

Careful and explicit instructions given by witness to Mr. Hallett and other sub-agents, to the effect that the signatures must be *bona fide*; *Roberts* 714. 768. 815. 836. 843-846—Employment by witness, exclusively, of all sub-agents engaged upon the petitions, the total sum paid by him amounting to about 376*l.*, *ib.* 735-737—Great variation in the amounts paid to different sub-agents, some having been much more active than others; stipulation in all cases that the signatures must be *bona fide*; *ib.* 766-776. 835-846. 859.

Employment of witness by Mr. Carlton Roberts to procure signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; his remuneration was fixed at 8*s.* per 100 signatures, and 3*l.* 3*s.* a week in addition, *Correll* 1156-1160—Total of 104*l.* 19*s.* 9*d.*, received by witness from Mr. Roberts, in remuneration for his services, and for payment of the men employed by him, *ib.* 1210-1215.

Employment of witness, who is a commercial traveller and collector, by Mr. Carlton Roberts, to obtain signatures to petitions in favour of the coal and wine dues; he was paid 3*l.* a week as salary, and 8*s.* for every 100 signatures, *Board* 1224-1229. 1251. 1252—Explicit instructions given to witness by Mr. Roberts as to all the signatures being *bona fide*; *ib.* 1255. 1257.

Application made to witness (who is secretary to the Central Finsbury Conservative Association) to procure signatures to petitions in favour of the coal and wine dues; total of 978 signatures obtained, four men having been employed who were well known to witness, *De Horne* 1284-1293—Total payment of 5*l.* received by witness; rate of payment made by him to the men, *ib.* 1287-1289. 1298. 1299—Signature attached by witness to one petition, and one only; he never put his name to any crosses, *ib.* 1302-1306.

Employment of witness (who is a photographer at Manor Park, Essex) by Mr. Roberts to obtain signatures to petitions; he was to receive 5*l.* for his services, and he paid canvassers at the rate of 5*s.* for every 100 signatures, *Stewart* 1315-1325—Supply of about 5,000 signatures by witness, some of which he obtained by canvassing in person; genuine character of all the latter signatures, *ib.* 1319-1321. 1326-1329.

See also Canvassers.	City Authorities.	Forged Signatures.	Responsibility.
175.	T		Anti-Coal

Anti-Coal Tax Committee. Presentation, through the instrumentality of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, of some 250 petitions, with about 25,000 signatures, about half of which were obtained by voluntary and unpaid agency, *Lloyd* 998-1015-1019. 1033-1037—Circumstance of a detective officer having been employed, mainly as a check upon the petitions got up in favour of the dues, *ib.* 1013, 1014. 1053-1055.

Explanation as to witness having been employed for detective purposes by Mr. Lloyd, on behalf of the Anti-Coal Tax Association, with reference to the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *Deaf* 1979. 1985-1994.

Arnold, Stephen. Belief that a man named Stephen Arnold had something to do with getting up the petition from East London; in this case one or two signatures inquired into by witness were not genuine, *Deaf* 1967, 1968.

Azeem Joh. Conclusion of the Committee that the case as regards Bidwood comes within the precedent of 1865, when certain persons were committed to Newgate for having got up petitions in favour of Azeem Joh., *Rep.* iii.

B.

Baker, Joseph S. Opinion that all the signatures to the petition of Joseph S. Baker are genuine, *Netherclift* 1760.

Bartlett, Charles William. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness was employed to obtain signatures in the street from passers-by to a petition against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; he denies that he allowed young boys and girls to sign, though women were allowed to do so, 1993-2040—He was in charge of the petition throughout the day, and was stationed for two-and-a-half days opposite the Holborn Town Hall, 2004-2007. 2019-2035—He was paid at the rate of 3d. per dozen signatures, and procured over 1,000 signatures altogether, 2014, 2015. 2041, 2042—Another man was employed outside the Royal Free Hospital in the Gray's Inn-road upon another petition, 2043. 2046.

Bethnal Green Petition. Similarity between the handwriting of some of the signatures to the Bethnal Green petition against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; result of some investigation that they were accepted as genuine, *Lloyd* 1058-1058.

Total of 127 signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twelve of these, *Netherclift* 1760—Further petition from Bethnal Green containing thirty-six signatures, of which about six are doubtful, *ib.*

Bidwood, Reginald. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Attendance of witness before the Committee in order to make a voluntary statement in connection with a letter addressed by him to the Speaker respecting the Haggerston petition, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, 92, 93.

Employment of witness by Mr. Hallett to obtain signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the dues, his remuneration being settled at 4s. per 100 signatures; total of from 3 l. to 3 l. 10 s. received, 94-103. 176, 177—Identification of the Haggerston petition as having been forged by witness throughout, the names having been all filled in by him from a directory; accidental smearing of the signatures, 104-120—Examination as to witness' antecedents, and as to the circumstances under which he was employed by Mr. Hallett, whom he had known for about two years; injunction by Mr. Hallett that every signature must be *dead*, *ib.* 112, 113. 124-129. 178-195. 206, 209. 214, 215. 227-230. 292-310.

Statement to the effect that witness had nothing whatever to do with Mr. Carlton Roberts in respect of the forged petitions, but has recently had some conversation with him at Mr. Wragg's office in the City, when witness said "he should make a clean breast of the matter," 121-123. 196-207—Total of from 1,600 to 1,700 signatures forged by witness, a suburban directory having supplied the names and addresses; between 400 and 500 of these were comprised in the Haggerston petition, 130-140. 282-291.

Lapse of four or five days before witness returned to Mr. Hallett the forged sheets forming the Haggerston petition; examination hereon as to his not canvassing for signatures, inasmuch as he thought he would make more money by filling them in, and he was in much distress at the time, 141-175. 213, 231—Employment of witness for three or four weeks on the whole number of signatures; care taken in writing the signatures differently so as not to excite suspicion, 150, 151. 171-175. 232-237—He has not received any further money from Mr. Hallett in connection with the petitions since the payment of from 3 l. to 3 l. 10 s., 210-212.

Explanation that Mr. Hallett fetched witness from his lodgings to go to Mr. Wragg's office, where he signed a statement about the petitions; this was about ten days ago, 216-222. 285, 286. 332-344. 405-421. 436-449—Examination as to the circumstances

Special Report, 1887—continued.

Bidmead, Reginald. (Analysis of his Evidence)—continued.

stances under which witness wrote the letter to the Speaker; he suggested it himself, and denies that it was drawn up for him by Mr. Hallett or Mr. Wragg, 293-296. 345-392.

Identification of most if not all the signatures to the Hackney and Homerton petition as having been filled in by witness, 235-239. He did not write the heading to any of the petitions, and did not supply the first signature in every case, but was not assisted by anybody in forging the names, 238-245. 260-263. 267-284. 450-452—Total of 281 signatures to the Hackney petition, all of which were made by witness, 246, 247. 266—Reference also to the Bow petition (presented by Captain Colomb), as having been all filled in by witness from a suburban directory, 248-259.

Supply of the sheets to witness by Mr. Hallett, 260-263—All the names on the Haggerston petition were signed by witness, 264, 265—Statement that the signature of William Lee on the Lower Clapton petition was not written by witness; nor was it on the sheet when received from Mr. Hallett, 267-284—Witness asked Lee to sign the petition, which he promised to do; he took away the petition and brought it back signed, 274-280—All the names on the Hackney and Dalston petition were signed by witness, 287-289—Three sheets of the Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland petitions were all signed by witness, 289-291.

Examination as to witness having told Mr. Hallett on the way to Mr. Wragg's office, that not only the Haggerston petition but all the others which passed through his hands were forged; circumstance of the former petition only having been mentioned in the letter to the Speaker, 363-417—Great concern on the part of Mr. Hallett when witness told him about the forged signatures; previous letter from witness to Mr. Hallett, assuring him the signatures were *bona fide*, 329-426.

Witness wrote the signatures without a moment's reflection; his conscience subsequently told him he had better make a clean breast of the matter, 421-426—Examination of the petition sheets by Mr. Hallett on receiving them from witness, who assured him they were all *bona fide*, 442, 443.

Bidmead, R. Employment of Bidmead by witness (who was himself employed by Mr. Carlton Roberts) to obtain signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, for which signatures Bidmead was to be paid at the rate of 4 s. per 100; *Hallett* 454-459. 477. 582, 583. 606, 607—Witness gave stringent instructions to Bidmead that all the signatures must be *bona fide*; *ib.* 460.

Nature of the check applied by witness to the petition sheets when received from Bidmead before handing them over to Mr. Roberts, *Hallett* 477. 505-513. 512—Discontinuation of Bidmead's employment as soon as suspicion attached to him, *ib.* 477—Circumstances under which witness was induced to give employment to Bidmead on the petitions; he had previously employed him on one or two occasions, *ib.* 488. 505-513.

Letter from R. Bidmead to the Speaker, dated 28th April 1887, admitting "with great shame and sorrow that the Haggerston petition was entirely concocted by him," *App.* 137.

Conclusion of the Committee as to the completeness of the case against Bidmead; large number of signatures forged by him, *Rep.* iii.

Opinion of the Committee that it is impossible for the House, with due respect to its rights, to pass over this case without serious notice; recommendation that it be dealt with as a breach of the privileges of the House, *Rep.* iii.

See also *Forged Signatures.* *Haggerston Petition.* *Letter to the Speaker.*

Board, Charles. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness, who is a commercial traveller and collector, by Mr. Carlton Roberts, to obtain signatures to petitions in favour of the coal and wine dues; he was paid 3 l. a week as salary, and 8 s. for every 100 signatures, 1224-1229. 1251, 1252—List of the men employed by witness; they came principally from South London, but procured signatures wherever they could, witness having full confidence that they would not forge signatures nor take any that were not genuine or were duplicated, 1230-1250. 1270-1281—Doubt whether witness could identify any of the petitions or sheets which passed through hands, the total signatures amounting to about 26,000; 1237-1239.

Character of the examination applied by witness to the petitions before he handed them over to Mr. Roberts; extent to which he was able to detect forged signatures, 1241-1246. 1253-1255. 1258-1262—Explicit instructions given to witness by Mr. Roberts as to all the signatures being *bona fide*, 1256. 1259—Statement as to ratepayers' signatures not having been stipulated for by witness, 1253-1268.

Bow Petition. Identification of a petition from Bow (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues), as having been presented by witness on the 23rd of March; recognition of a few names to this petition as those of members of his constituency, whilst there

Bow Petition—continued.

there was nothing in the general character of the signatures to excite his suspicion, *Colomb 50-65*—Belief that this petition was received by witness at the Cloak Room of the House; explanation hereon that he has frequently received petitions at the Cloak Room for presentation, respecting which he has had no communication whatever, *ib. 66-75*.

Reference to the Bow petition (presented by Captain Colomb) as having been all filled in by witness from a suburban directory, *Bidmead 248-259*.

Total of 127 signatures to the petition from Bow; doubt as to six of these, *Netherclift 1760*.

Brixton and Peckham Petition. Conclusion as to the forgery of signatures to the petition from Brixton and Peckham, *Netherclift 1659 et seq.*—This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 1,525 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *ib. 1749*.

Bromley-by-Bow Petition. Conclusion as to the fraud committed in connection with the petition from Bromley-by-Bow, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *Netherclift 1659 et seq.*—There are 517 signatures, nearly all of which witness believes to be false, *ib. 1749*.

Bromley St. Leonard Petition. This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 425 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift 1749*.

Bryant, Arthur Ramsey. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness denies having signed, or authorised any one to sign, his name to a petition in favour of the coal and wine dues, *2141-2156*.

Bryant, Edward. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Statement to the effect that witness was asked in a public-house to sign a petition for the continuance of the coal and wine dues, and that he did so; he identifies his signature on a petition submitted to him by the Committee, *2118-2140*.

Burnhope Colliery (Durham). Employment of the same hand in filling in the names of miners in the petition from Burnhope Colliery, there being no attempt to disguise, *Netherclift 1656. 1693-1695. 1757-1760*.

C.

Camberwell and Greenwich Petition. This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 1,406 signatures, more than half of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift 1748, 1749*.

Camberwell Petition. Question raised by witness as to the genuineness of some of the signatures to the Camberwell petition against the continuance of the coal and wine dues; assurance given by the collector that they were all right, *Lloyd 1052. 1065-1067*.

CANVASSERS:

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill.*
2. *Petitions against the Bill.*

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill:*

Employment of witness by Mr. Hallett to canvass for signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the dues, his remuneration being settled at 4s. per 100 signatures; total of from 3 l. to 3 l. 10 s. received, *Bidmead 94-103. 176, 177*—Examination as to witness' antecedents, and as to the circumstances under which he was employed by Mr. Hallett, whom he had known for about two years; injunction by Mr. Hallett that every signature must be *bona fide*; *ib. 110, 113. 124-129. 178-195. 208, 209. 214, 215. 217-230. 292-310*—He has not earned any further money from Mr. Hallett in connection with the petitions since the payment of from 3 l. to 3 l. 10 s., *ib. 210-212*.

List of persons besides Bidwell employed by witness to collect signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *Hallett 574-576*—Total of about 52 l. paid by witness to canvassers; doubt as to the number of signatures represented, *ib. 602, 603. 615*.

Facility with which signatures may be obtained; between Saturday and Wednesday 400 signatures might easily be procured by one active canvasser, *Hallett 610-612. 627-629*

CANVASSERS—continued.

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill*—continued.
627-629—Payment of the canvassers at from 4 s. to 4 s. 6 d. per 100; at this rate of payment any amount of signatures can be obtained in London, *Hallett* 610-619.

Advantages of the system of paying canvassers a certain sum for 100 signatures instead of by the day, *Roberts* 859—Very large number of signatures obtainable in one day by taking the petition sheets through large drapery establishments, *ib.*

Great pressure under which the work of canvassing for signatures was undertaken; that is, in view of the action already taken by the opponents of the coal and wine duties, *Wragg* 966, 987. 976—Expediency in future of the employment of a larger staff in canvassing for petitions, and of greater vigilance generally, *ib.* 987.

Pressure put by witness upon his agents as to getting in all the latter petitions by a certain day, the irregularities which occurred applying chiefly to these petitions, *Roberts* 990—Satisfactory course pursued by the canvassers in so far as witness himself was asked by one of them for his signature, *ib.* 993.

Total of about 26,000 signatures obtained by witness, several men having been employed by him at varying rates per 100 signatures procured; particulars as to the class of men employed and the instructions given them, *Carroll* 1163-1178, 1189-1198, 1210-1223—Much better rate of payment of some of the men than others, *ib.* 1193, 1194, 1222, 1223.

List of the men employed by witness; they came principally from South London, but procured signatures wherever they could, witness having full confidence that they would not forge signatures, nor take any that were not genuine or were duplicated, *Board* 1230-1250, 1270-1281.

Employment of witness (who is a clerk and traveller at Brockley) by Mr. Board, of Brockley, to collect signatures for a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; he was instructed that the signatures must be those of adults, and must be *bona fide*; *Taylor* 1409-1417—House-to-house canvass by witness for signatures, which were collected on separate sheets; he was paid at the rate of 5 s. per 100 signatures, but collected less than 200, *ib.* 1414, 1415, 1418-1420, 1430-1441—Readiness of the great majority of those called upon by witness to sign the petition; to the best of his knowledge and belief all the signatures were genuine, *ib.* 1431-1437—Very few objected to sign, not more than one person in every ten or fifteen, *ib.* 1435, 1434.

Employment of from 115 to 120 canvassers; great improbability of collusion between all these, *Roberts* 1810-1816.

Payment of witness at the rate of 6 s. per 100 signatures, *Usher* 1898-1900.

Employment of witness (who is a commercial traveller, residing in Walworth) by Mr. Hallett, to collect signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; injunction by Mr. Hallett that all the signatures must be genuine, *Sharland* 2223-2233, 2252, 2253, 2269—Payment of witness at the rate of 4 s. 6 d. per 100 signatures, with a small allowance for expenses, *ib.* 2234, 2235, 2243, 2293 *et seq.*—Collection of signatures, chiefly at the Peabody Buildings, witness having attested with his own signature when parties were unable to write their own names, *ib.* 2239-2242—House-to-house canvass carried out by witness; he did not ask any one to sign in the street, and did not represent that the petition related to the closing of public-houses, *ib.* 2250, 2251, 2254-2255.

Inability of witness to state how much he paid to A. G. Sharland; the latter probably brought from 11,000 to 14,000 signatures, *Hallett* 2270-2276, 2288, 2289—Belief that Sharland got many signatures at model lodging-houses; degree of check applied to the sheets by witness, *ib.* 2277, 2285-2287—Recommendations which induced witness to give employment to Sharland, *ib.* 2290-2292.

Further information respecting the remuneration received by witness from Mr. Hallett, the probable number of signatures collected, and the way in which his canvass was conducted, *Sharland* 2293 *et seq.*—Circumstance of witness having had two other petitions in charge at the time he was collecting signatures in favour of the coal and wine duties particulars hereon, *ib.* 2295-2297, 2374-2376, 2386-2396.

Statement as to witness having employed his brother and five or six other men to procure signatures, and to bring only genuine ones; he paid them at the rate of 3 s. a hundred, *Sharland* 2335-2373, 2378-2385—Total of from 14 l. to 15 l. received by witness from Mr. Hallett, *ib.* 2377.

Employment by the sub-agents of canvassers to procure signatures, at varying rates of payment per 100 signatures, *ib.*—Remuneration of the canvassers on a scale of from 3 s. to 6 s. per 100 signatures, *ib.*

CANVASSERS—continued.

2. *Petitions against the Bill:*

List of seven canvassers employed by the anti-coal tax committee; steps taken to ascertain their respectability, *Lloyd* 1020-1024. 1028-1040.

Responsible men employed by witness for leaving the petition forms at various factories and workshops all over London, and for obtaining signatures in the streets, more than 200 petitions having been issued, of which ninety-two, containing 12,505 signatures, were eventually presented to the House, *Wilson* 1103. 1120, 1121. 1131.—Practice as to the payment of men employed by witness to obtain signatures, and as to the checks upon abuse, *ib.* 1103. 1107. 1111-1113.

Witness, who was employed on petitions against the coal and wine dues, was paid at the rate of 2 d. per dozen signatures, and procured over 1,000 signatures altogether, *Bartlett* 2014, 2015. 2041, 2042.

See also *Agents. Forged Signatures. King's Cross and St. Pancras Petition. Street Canvassing.*

Correll, Thomas. (Analysis of his Evidence).—Employment of witness by Mr. Carlton Roberts to procure signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; his remuneration was fixed at 8 s. per 100 signatures, and 3 l. 3 s. a week in addition, 1155-1152.—Total of about 26,000 signatures obtained by witness, several men having been employed by him at varying rates per 100 signatures procured; particulars as to the class of men employed, and the instructions given them, 1163-1178. 1189-1198. 1210-1223.

Return of the petition sheets to Mr. Roberts after witness had examined the signatures; difficulty on his part as to his now identifying any of the petitions or sheets which passed through his hands, 1184. 1187-1170. 1182-1188. 1195-1209.—Instance of a petition with forged signatures having been brought to witness by one of the men employed by him; this he destroyed, and dismissed the man, 1168-1173.—Denial by witness that he attached his own signature on more than one occasion, 1179-1181.

Reluctance of witness to admit or to believe that the petitions handed over by him to Mr. Roberts bore numerous false signatures; readiness of the men employed by him to swear that the signatures procured by them are genuine, 1189-1221.—Much better rate of payment of some of the men than of others, 1193. 1194. 1222, 1223.—Facility with which signatures were obtained in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, 1190-1192.—Total of 104 l. 19 s. 9 d. received by witness from Mr. Roberts in remuneration for his services, and for payment of the men employed by him, 1210-1215.

City Authorities. Witness (who is a solicitor and political agent) was employed by the City authorities in connection with the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; instructions received by him from the City solicitor in the matter, *Wragg* 880-872.—Explanation that there was no arrangement with the City authorities as to witness' scale of remuneration; he had acted professionally for the Corporation on several previous occasions, *ib.* 874-879. 899-902. 936-942. 956. 978.

Clapton Petition. Statement that the signature of William Lee on the Lower Clapton petition was not written by witness; nor was it on the sheet when received from Mr. Hallett, *Bidmead* 267-284.—Lee promised to sign the petition, which he took away and brought back signed, *ib.* 274-280.

Entire inaccuracy of Bidmead's statement as to his having given a petition to witness to sign; witness neither signed the petition in question, nor was he asked by Bidmead to do so, *Lee* 683-699.

The Lower Clapton petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 169 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Clerkenwell Petition. The Clerkenwell petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 328 signatures, nearly all of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Non-genuine character of some of the signatures to the petition from Clerkenwell, *Deat* 1572, 1573.

Coal and Wine Dues. See the *Headings generally throughout the Index.*

Colomb, Captain John Charles Ready (a Member of the House). (Analysis of his Evidence).—Presentation by witness of some petitions for and against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, 48, 49.—Identification of a petition from Bow as having been presented by him on the 23rd of March; recognition of a few names to this petition as those of members of his constituency, whilst there was nothing in the general character of

Colomb, Captain John Charles Ready, M.P. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—continued.

of the signatories to excite his suspicion, 50-52.—Belief that this petition was received by witnesses at the Cloak Room of the House; explanation hereon that he has frequently received petitions at the Cloak Room for presentation, respecting which he has had no communication whatever, 53. 55-75.

Comber, William Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is Order Messenger to the House of Commons, submits particulars as to his having called at the addresses of nine persons purporting to have signed the King's Cross petition, and as to five of these persons not being known at the alleged addresses, 1370-1408.—Service of a summons on William Sadler, who promised to attend the Committee, and who said he had signed the petition, 1375-1375.—Summons served also upon Charles Martin, through his wife, who said Martin had signed a petition, 1375-1375.

Instruction received by witness for the summoning of forty-one persons to attend before the Committee, with reference to their names being attached to certain petition sheets in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, 2082.—Difficulty as to finding the addresses, the result being that witness discovered only four persons who admitted having signed, 2083-2090. 2157-2162.

D.

Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland Petition. Three sheets of the Dalston, Hackney, and Kingsland petition were all signed by witness, *Bidmead* 289-291.

This petition, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, contains 1,553 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Dalston and Stoke Newington Petition. Total of 1,440 signatures in this petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues), nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

De Horne, William Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Application made to witness, who is secretary to the Central Finsbury Conservative Association, to procure signatures to petitions in favour of the coal and wine dues; total of 578 signatures obtained, four men having been employed who were well known to witness, 1282-1293.—Total payment of 5 l. received by witness; rate of payment made by him to the men, 1287-1289. 1298, 1299.—Collection of the signatures chiefly in Central Finsbury; examination applied to the sheets by witness before handing them over to Mr. Roberts, 1294-1297. 1300, 1301.—Signature attached by witness to one petition, and one only; he never put his name to any crosses, 1300-1305.

Dent, Ernest Alfred. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness (who is assistant to Mr. Attwood, private inquiry agent), to inquire into the genuineness of the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, 1951-1953. 1985-1994.

Inaccuracy as regards petition No. 41 of the statement that a meeting in favour of the petition was held at Mile End Old Town, at which Mr. Francis Church was chairman, 1954-1957.—Explanation also that no meeting was held, as alleged, at Page's Coffee Rooms, Islington, in connection with petition No. 115; 1957-1961.—Nor was any meeting of ratepayers and householders held on 15th December, at Parkfield-street, in the case of petition No. 21; 1961, 1962.—Nor were certain alleged meetings held in connection with petitions No. 43 and No. 4255; 1962.

Result of witness' inquiries with regard to the Haggerston petition that out of six signatories investigated three were not genuine, 1962-1967. 1980-1984.—Belief that a man named Stephen Arnold had something to do with getting up the petition from East London; in this case one or two signatures inquired into by witness were not genuine, 1967, 1968.

Information respecting the petition from Lambeth, Kennington, and Westminster, the greater part of which seems to have been obtained by a man named James Sharland, of Kennington; great shams in this case, numerous signatures having been obtained under false representations, 1968-1972. 1978.—Non-genuine character of some of the signatures to the petition from Clerkenwell, 1972, 1973.—Haphazard way in which signatures were taken from each petition for investigation by witness, 1974-1978.

Opinion that the petitions against the continuance of the coal and wine duties were pretty genuine, 1976, 1977.—Explanation as to witness having been employed in this matter by Mr. Lloyd, on behalf of the Anti-Coal Tax Association, 1979. 1985-1994.

Deptford and Greenwich Petition. This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues), contains 434 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Dulwich and Peckham Petition. See *Peckham and Dulwich*.

E.

East London Petition. This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues), contains 1,093 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherliff* 1749—See also *Arnold, Stephen*.

East St. Pancras Petition. Employment of witness to investigate the signatures to a petition from East St. Pancras, against the continuance of the coal and wine dues; total of seventy-three signatures, of which thirty-nine were inquired into by witness, *Miles* 1442-1455—Particulars respecting witness' investigation and its result; very doubtful character of eighteen out of thirty-nine signatures inquired into, *ib.* 1454-1494.

Total of 117 signatures to this petition, thirty being doubtful, *Netherliff* 1780—Further petition with seventy-three signatures, of which twenty are doubtful, *ib.*—Further petition containing 168 signatures, of which thirty-five are doubtful, *ib.*

Edmondson, James. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness by Mr. Middleton to collect signatures in the Gray's Inn-road to a petition against the coal and wine dues; he saw all the signatures attached, and believes the signatories resided in the locality, 1630-1649—Neither woman nor children were allowed to sign, 1641.

Expenditure. Explanation that witness has not yet been repaid a single penny of his outlay, having deferred sending in his account to Mr. Wragg, *Roberts* 713-718.

Further statement as to witness not having been repaid his disbursements, whilst he has received no remuneration for his own services; difficulty on his part in stating the probable amount of his own remuneration, *Roberts* 777-783, 833.

There was no agreement with Mr. Roberts as to his remuneration; inability of witness to state how much Mr. Roberts expects, or should be paid, especially as so many signatures have been forged, *Wragg* 857, 903, 904, 943-949.

Total of only 193 l. 14 s. paid in connection with the petitions against the continuance of the coal and wine dues, including 20 l. for the services of a detective officer, *Lloyd* 1025-1027, 1041, 1042.

Steps proposed by witness to the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, and subsequently carried out, for obtaining signatures to petitions against the coal and wine dues; sum of 30 l. placed at his disposal for this purpose, followed by a further sum of 10 l., *Wilson* 1103, 1107, 1151-1153—Explanation that witness' services in the matter of petitions have been entirely gratuitous; he has expended about 58 l. or 53 l. towards which he has received 40 l., *ib.* 1141, 1151-1153.

See also *Agents and Sub-Agents. Canvasers. City Authorities.*

F.

Factories. Irregularity as regards signatures to petitions in the case of factory hands, when one man is asked by several others to sign for them, *Roberts* 993.

Ford, George. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness signed a petition, whether for or against the continuance of the coal and wine dues he cannot say, but denies having written the signature "George Ford," attached to the Peckham and Dulwich petition, in favour of such continuance, 1059-1081.

FORGED SIGNATURES:

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Dues Continuance Bill*
2. *Petitions against the Bill.*

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Dues Continuance Bill:*

Explanation respecting the intentional smearing of the signatures to some of the petitions; similar handwriting traceable through nine petitions now produced by witness, *Taylor* 15-20—Suspicious character of twenty additional petitions, as produced by witness in favour of the duties; belief that a very much larger number of signatures to each petition are not genuine, or are questionable, *ib.* 675, 676, 681, 682.

Statement to the effect that witness had nothing whatever to do with Mr. Carlton Roberts in respect of the forged petitions, but has recently had some conversation with him at Mr. Wragg's office in the City, when witness said "he should make a clean breast of the matter," *Bidwood* 121-123, 196-207—Total of from 1,500 to 1,700 signatures forged by witness, a suburban directory having supplied the names and addresses; between

FORGED SIGNATURES—continued.

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill*—continued.

between 400 and 500 of these were comprised in the Haggerston petition, *Bidmead* 130-140, 282-291.

Lapse of four or five days before witness returned to Mr. Hallett the forged sheets forming the Haggerston petition; examination hereon as to his not canvassing for signatures, inasmuch as he thought he would make more money by filling them in, and he was in much distress at the time, *Bidmead* 141-175, 213, 231.—Employment of witness for three or four weeks on the whole number of signatures; care taken in writing the signatures differently so as not to excite suspicion, *ib.* 150, 151, 171-175, 232-237.

Explanation that Mr. Hallett fetched witness from his lodgings to go to Mr. Wragg's office when he signed a statement about the petitions; this was about ten days ago, *Bidmead* 218-222, 285, 288, 312-344, 405-435-449.—He did not write the heading to any of the petitions, and did not supply the first signatures in every case, but was not assisted by anybody in forging the names, *ib.* 236-245, 260-263, 267-284, 450-452.

Examination as to witness having told Mr. Hallett, on the way to Mr. Wragg's office, that not only the Haggerston petition, but all the others which passed through his hands, were forged; circumstance of the former petition only having been mentioned in the letter to the Speaker, *Bidmead* 303-407.—Great concern on the part of Mr. Hallett when witness told him about the forged signatures; previous letter from witness to Mr. Hallett assuring him the signatures were *bona fide*, *ib.* 399-406.

Witness wrote the signatures without a moment's reflection; his conscience subsequently told him he had better make a clean breast of the matter, *Bidmead* 411-426.

Belief that many of the sheets picked out by Bidmead as having been forged by him were not forged at all, and that his forgeries were distributed over a much larger number of petitions than was stated by him, *Roberts* 859.

Instance of a petition with forged signatures having been brought to witness by one of the men employed by him; this he destroyed and dismissed the man, *Carroll* 1188-1173.—Denial by witness that he attached his own signature on more than one occasion, *ib.* 1179-1181.—Reluctance of witness to admit or to believe that the petitions handed over by him to Mr. Roberts have numerous false signatures; readiness of the men employed by him to swear that the signatures procured by them are genuine, *ib.* 1189-1221.

Character of the examination applied by witness to the petitions before he handed them over to Mr. Roberts; extent to which he was able to detect forged signatures, *ib.* 1241-1246, 1253-1255, 1258-1262.

Instances of forged signatures, notably those of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. A. J. Balfour, as well as of filthy matter on some of the sheets supplied to witness by his sub-agents, *Stewart* 1330-1334.

Gross fraud in the case of six petitions (examined by witness) in favour of the continuance of the duties; particulars hereon as to the very extensive fabrication of signatures in batches, *Nethercliff* 1630-1666, 1688-1692, 1696-1711, 1719-1725.—Several thousand forged signatures in the six petitions in question, *ib.* 1664-1686.—Three different hands used in forging signatures to the petitions, *ib.* 1688-1692, 1710.—Four times as many forged signatures in the petitions in favour of the duties as in the petitions against them, *ib.* 1720, 1721.

Result of further and careful investigation that witness has come to the conclusion that nearly all the signatures to the petitions in favour of the coal and wine duties are forgeries; details to this effect, *Nethercliff* 1743 *et seq.*—Employment of three or four hands in nearly all the petitions in favour of the continuance of the duties, *ib.* 1747, 1748, 1751-1755, 1775-1782.

Summary of the petitions examined by witness, thirty-three in number, in favour of the duties, showing the number of signatures in each case, nearly all of which he believes to be false, *Nethercliff* 1748-1756, 1761.—Palpable fraud in connection with the petitions in favour of the duties, whole batches of signatures being made by the same hand, *ib.* 1763-1768, 1775-1782.

Comment upon Mr. Nethercliff's assumption that the petitions have been concocted by about three persons, and the signatures filled in by them; statement purporting to show that this was utterly impracticable, *Roberts* 1810-1815.—Belief that, excepting the signatures forged by Bidmead, the first signatures to all the petitions can be verified, *ib.* 1814.

Instances of forged signatures to several petitions investigated by witness, *Dent* 1957 *et seq.*—Haphazard way in which signatures were taken from each petition for investigation by witness, *ib.* 1974-1976.

Inquiry made by witness (as directed by the Committee) in the case of twenty-nine petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, whether each individual whose name was appended to the prayer-sheet of each petition had really signed, *ib.* 1976.

FORGED SIGNATURES—continued.

1. *Petitions in favour of the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill*—continued.

Simcox 2050-2054—Receipt of fourteen answers to this inquiry, eleven of which are in the affirmative, whilst three persons deny having signed; particulars to this effect, *ib.* 2051, 2052, 2057, 2058—Obstacles to the ascertainment by witness whether any one person had signed more than one petition; insufficient time, moreover, for any more exhaustive inquiry, *ib.* 2054-2056—Return of four of witnesses' letters of inquiry through the Dead Letter Office, whilst six more persons admit having signed, and four deny having done so, *ib.* 2222.

Instructions received by witness for the summoning of forty-one persons to attend before the Committee, with reference to their names being attached to certain petition sheets in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, *Cumbe 2086*—Difficulty as to finding the addresses, the result being that witnesses discovered only four persons who admitted having signed, *ib.* 2083-2090, 2157-2162.

Statement to the effect that the alleged signature of witness to a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties is a forgery, *Odell 2091-2104*; *Mansy 2105-2117*—Witness denies having signed, or authorised any one to sign, his name to a petition in favour of the coal and wine duties, *Bryant 2141-2156*; *Hill 2183-2171*.

Special Report of the Committee, dated 2nd May, to the effect that other petitions besides that from Haggerston have since been presented, the signatures to which appear to be fictitious or forged, and that previous to the presentation of the Haggerston petitions there were other petitions relating to the same subject which excited suspicion, *Rep. ii.*

Conclusion of the Committee (with regard to the petitions for the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill) that there is evidence of extensive fraud, and that twenty-one of them, specially selected for examination, were proved to be wholly or in great part forgeries, *Rep. iii.*

2. *Petitions against the Bill* :

Examination by an expert of some of the petitions adverse to the continuance of the coal and wine duties : opinion that these generally are of a very fair character, though some irregularities may exist in them, *Taylor 672-674, 677-680*.

Opinion that the signatures to the petitions collected through the action of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee were honestly collected, and were *bona fide*; examination hereon as to the means and opportunities of witness for applying any efficient test to so many as 25,000 signatures, *Lloyd 995-1012, 1051-1058, 1065-1067*.

Scrutiny applied by witness to every sheet before passing it for presentation to the House; belief that he can produce every one of the men in whose presence all the signatures were attached, *Wilson 1107, 1111-1116, 1139, 1140*.

Explanation showing that witness can identify a considerable number of petitions as having passed through his hands; reference hereon to a list of the persons responsible for these petitions, though they did not actually collect the signatures, *Lloyd 1310-1314*.

Statement to the effect that in twenty-six petitions against the Bill witness has detected only about 100 signatures not genuine, *Nethercliff 1654-1659, 1667-1681, 1712-1715*—List of petitions (as examined by witness) together with the number of signatures to each; comparatively limited extent to which the signatures are not genuine, *ib.* 1757-1784—Total of 5,284 signatures to petitions adverse to the duties, out of which there are 428 doubtful, *ib.* 1760, 1774.

Frequent instances of the same hand signing for several people in the petitions against the duties, but without any attempt at concealment; conclusion generally that there is no palpable fraud in the case of these petitions, *Nethercliff 1781-1784, 1772, 1773*.

Opinion that the petitions against the continuance of the coal and wine duties were pretty genuine, *Deal 1976, 1977*.

Conclusion of the Committee that whilst irregularities have been proved in the manner in which signatures were obtained to petitions against the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill, the signatures are in the main genuine, and free from suspicion of fraud, *Rep. iii.*

See also the *Headings generally throughout the Index*.

G.

Graham, Charles Stewart. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness is temporary clerk to Mr. B. G. Webster, who presented the petition from King's Cross and St. Pancras against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, 1068-1071.

Inquiry made by witness, at the direction of Mr. Webster, as to the genuineness of this petition, which comprised eighty-one signatures; result of careful personal investigation in the case of thirty signatories that ten were not genuine, 1072-1088—Belief that the petition was placed on a table in the Gray's Inn-road, with a man attending to it who asked the passers-by to sign, 1089-1096.

Grellier,

Special Report, 1887—continued.

Grellier, John George. (Analysis of his Evidence).—Witness, who is a stationer and printer in the Gray's Inn-road, did not sign the petition from King's Cross presented to the House on the 6th May against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; signatures thereto of his two sons, aged sixteen and eighteen respectively, 1335-1345. 1359-1363. 1368, 1369.—Explanation that this petition was placed on a table outside witness' shop with a small handbill describing its object; it was in charge of a person named Middleton and an assistant, 1347-1358. 1365, 1367.

Greenwich and Camberwell Petition. Reference to the petition from Greenwich and Camberwell, on containing, in witness' opinion, a very large number of forged signatures; there are the names of some thirteen racehorses upon the last sheet of this petition, *Taylor* 656-684.

Explanation as to the names of racehorses having appeared as signatures; probability that the sheet had been left at a public-house, *Roberts* 807.—Strong repudiation by witness of the petition from Greenwich, comprising the names of racehorses; witness knows nothing of Mr. Ball who got up this petition, *Wragg* 883-886.

Conclusion as to the fraudulent signatures attached to the Greenwich petition, *Nethercift* 1659 *et seq.*—Total of 1,406 signatures to this petition, more than half of which witness believes to be false, *ib.* 1748, 1749.

H.

Hackney and Dalston Petition. All the names on the Hackney and Dalston petition were signed by witness, *Bidmead* 287-289.

Hackney and East London Petition. This petition, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, contains 222 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Nethercift* 1749.

Hackney and Homerton Petition. Identification of most, if not all, the signatures to the Hackney and Homerton petition as having been filled in by witness, *Bidmead* 235-239.

This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 281 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Nethercift* 1749.

Hackney Petition. Total of 281 signatures to the Hackney petition, all of which were made by witness, *Bidmead* 245, 247. 265.

HAGGERSTON PETITION:

Result of witness' examination of the petition from Haggerston (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties) that he concluded the signatures were forgeries, whereupon he officially reported the same, *Taylor* 13.

Attendance of witness before the Committee in order to make a voluntary statement in connection with a letter addressed by him to the Speaker respecting the Haggerston petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, *Bidmead* 92, 93.

Identification of the Haggerston petition as having been forged by witness throughout, the names having been all filled in by him from a Directory; accidental smearing of the signatures, *Bidmead* 104-120. 264. 265.

Assurance given to witness by Bidmead, when taxed with the non-genuineness of the Haggerston petition, that all the signatures were genuine; letter also from Bidmead to the same effect, *Hallett* 461-470. 477.—Explanation as to witness having accompanied Bidmead to Mr. Wragg's office, about the 25th April, when the former confessed that the signatures were forgeries; belief that Mr. Roberts suggested that Bidmead should go to Mr. Wragg's office, *ib.* 475-481. 514-526. 558, 559. 584-589.

Examination to the effect that Bidmead had almost confessed on his way to Mr. Wragg's office, that other signatures besides those to the Haggerston petition were not genuine; witness, however, did not press him beyond the latter petition, and the letter to the Speaker was limited accordingly, *Hallett* 489-504. 513 *et seq.* 630-635.—Further statement as to witness not having investigated other petitions when Bidmead confessed that the Haggerston petition was a forgery, *ib.* 613, 614.

Inquiry made by witness, through Mr. Hallett, on hearing that the signatures to the Haggerston petition (presented by Lord Claud Hamilton) had been questioned in the House of Commons; assurance subsequently given to Mr. Hallett by Bidmead that the signatures were genuine, *Roberts* 719.—Test applied to some of the signatures, which were discovered to be fictitious; admission thereupon by Bidmead that he had forged them, *ib.* 719, 720.

Arrangement made by witness as to Mr. Hallett and Bidmead attending at Mr. Wragg's office, when their depositions in the matter were taken down; that is, with reference only to the Haggerston petition, *Roberts* 721-723. 727, 728. 824-834.—Extent

HAGGERSTON PETITION—continued.

of witness' inspection of the Haggerston petition; conclusion on his part that it was all right, as he identified the first same on one of the sheets as that of a person favourable to the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *Roberts* 726, 758, 825, 826.

Statement to the effect that Bidmead had admitted only 200 forged signatures to the Haggerston petition up to the time of witness having prepared the letter from him to the Speaker; nor had witness any idea when he suggested this letter that any other petitions were questioned, *Roberts* 738-757, 784-787, 818, 824, 827-830.

Opinion from a cur-ory examination of the Haggerston petition that some of the signatures are not genuine, *Netherlyft* 1685-1687, 1692—Total of 449 signatures to the Haggerston petition, nearly all of which are false, the same hand being largely employed in signing, *ib.* 1746, 1747, 1769-1771, 1781, 1782.

Result of witness' inquiries with regard to the Haggerston petition, that out of six signatures investigated three were not genuine, *Deal* 1962-1967, 1980-1984.

Letter from Bidmead to the Speaker confessing that the Haggerston petition was entirely concocted by him, *App.* 137.

Statement by Mr. Roberts, dated 27th April 1887, respecting his employment of Mr. J. W. Hallett to collect signatures, and the employment of Bidmead by the latter; good faith with which Mr. Roberts acted in forwarding the petition in question for presentation, *App.* 137.

Evidence of Bidmead (as taken down by Mr. Wragg), dated 27th April 1887; confession therein as to the forgery of numerous signatures, *App.* 138.

Statement by Mr. J. W. Hallett, in explanation of his employment by Mr. Roberts, of his own employment of Bidmead, and of the instructions given to him; confession by the latter as to the forgery of signatures, *App.* 138.

Special Report from the Committee to the effect that previous to the presentation of the petition from Haggerston there were other petitions relating to the same subject which excited suspicion, *Rep.* ii.

See also *Letter to the Speaker*.

Hallett, John Walter. (Analysis of his Evidence).—Witness, who resides at Hackney and is a political agent, was engaged upon the petition in favour of the continuance of the wine and coal duties, and employed Bidmead to get signatures, for which payment was to be made at the rate of 4 s. per 100; 454-459, 477, 582, 583, 606, 607—He gave stringent instructions to Bidmead that all the signatures must be *dead fide*, 450.

Assurance given to witness by Bidmead, when subsequently taxed with the non-genuineness of the Haggerston petition, that all the signatures were genuine; letter also from Bidmead to the same effect, 461-470, 477—Explanation as to witness having accompanied Bidmead to Mr. Wragg's office about the 25th April, when the former confessed that the signatures were forgeries; belief that Mr. Roberts suggested that Bidmead should go to Mr. Wragg's office, 475-481, 514-526, 558, 559, 584-589—Nature of the check applied by witness to the petition sheets, when received from Bidmead, before handing them over to Mr. Roberts, 477, 505-513, 552—Discontinuance of Bidmead's employment as soon as suspicion attached to him, 477.

Statement as regards the letter written by Bidmead to the Speaker that the form and terms of it were supplied by Mr. Roberts; it was written by the former in the presence of witness, who approved of it, 482-488, 500, 501, 527, 555, 645-652—Circumstances under which witness was induced to give employment to Bidmead on the petition; he had previously employed him on one or two occasions, 488, 565-573—Examination to the effect that Bidmead had almost confessed, on his way to Mr. Wragg's office, that other signatures, besides those to the Haggerston petition, were not genuine; witness, however, did not press him beyond the latter petition, and the letter to the Speaker was limited accordingly, 489-504, 513, 630-635 *et seq.*

Doubt as to the number of petition sheets or of printed headings given by witness to Bidmead and other canvassers; printed and written headings were given to all the men employed, 505-507, 538-505—Remuneration of witness at the rate of three guineas a week, irrespective of his payments to canvassers, 508, 577-581, 608-610—List of persons (besides Bidmead) employed by witness to collect signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, 574-576.

Explanation as to witness' mode of distributing the separate sheets among the canvassers, and as to the sheets, when signed, having been returned loose to Mr. Roberts; witness had nothing to do with putting them together under the printed heads, 590-596, 604, 605, 618-626, 638-644—Total of about 52 l. paid by witness to canvassers; doubt as to the number of signatures represented, 602, 603, 615—Payment of the canvassers at from 4 s. to 4 s. 6 d. per 100; at this rate of payment any amount of signatures can be obtained in London, 610-612.

Further

Special Report, 1887—continued.

Hallett, John Walter. (Analysis of his Evidence)—continued.

Further statement as to witness not having investigated other petitions when Bidmead confessed that the Haggerston petition was a forgery, 613, 614.—Opinion as to the worthless character of the petitions generally presented to Parliament; belief that not more than twenty-five per cent. of the signatures are genuine, 616, 617.—Facility with which signatures may be obtained; between Saturday and Wednesday 400 signatures might easily be procured by one active canvasser, 627-629.

[Second Examination.]—Explanation that John Sharland was not employed nor paid by witness, but only his brother, A. G. Sharland, 2267-2269, 2274-2282, 2288, 2289.—Inability of witness to state how much he paid to A. G. Sharland; the latter probably brought from 11,000 to 14,000 signatures, 2270-2276, 2288, 2289.—Belief that Sharland got many signatures at model lodging-houses; degree of check applied to the sheets by witness, 2277, 2282-2287.—Recommendations which induced witnesses to give employment to Sharland, 2290-2292.

Hallett, J. W. Opinion of the Committee that the conduct of Mr. Hallett is open to grave reflection, and that his evidence is contradictory, *Rep.* iii.

See also *Forged Signatures.* *Responsibility.*

Ham, North West, Petition. Several instances of forged signatures to the North West Ham petition, *Taylor* 665-668.—This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 1,139 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Headings to Petitions. See *Sheets and Headings.*

Hill, Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence).—Statement to the effect that witness was asked to sign a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues but declined to do so; nor did he authorise anyone to sign for him, 2163-2171.

Holloway Petitions. Total of sixty-two signatures to the Holloway petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to ten of these, *Netherclift* 1756.—Further petitions containing thirty-five signatures, of which about six are doubtful, *ib.*

Homerton Petition. See *Hackney and Homerton.*

Howard, Joseph (Member of the House). (Analysis of his Evidence).—Presentation by witness of about six petitions on the subject of the coal and wine dues, most of which were received in the cloak-room, 76, 77.—Statement to the effect that his attention was not specially attracted nor his suspicion excited by the character of the signatures, though on closer inspection he sees considerable resemblance between the handwriting of different signatures, whilst some of them look as if intentionally smeared, 78-91.

Hummer, Alfred Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence).—Witness, who lives in the Commercial-road, Peckham, was asked, in a public-house, to sign the Peckham and Dulwich petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, and now identifies his signature to the petition, 2208-2213.—The petition was also signed in witness' presence by a young man named Hallett, 2214, 2215.

L

Liford Petition. Belief that all or nearly all the signatures to the Liford petition are false, *Netherclift* 1746.

Issacs, Lewis Henry (Member of the House). (Analysis of his Evidence).—Explanation as to witness having recently watched for a short time whilst signatures were being attached to a petition in charge of a man at the corner of the Gray's Inn-road, opposite the Holborn Town Hall; this petition was against the continuance of the coal and wine dues, 1726-1728, 1731-1737.—Comment upon the signing of the petition (without any apparent check by the man in charge) by a large number of boys and girls, some of them not more than thirteen or fourteen years old, who seemed to regard the matter as a good joke; conclusion as to the worthlessness of petitions generally where the signatures are thus obtained in the streets, 1727-1742.

K.

Kensington Petition. Total of sixty-three signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to five of these, *Netherclift* 1760.

Kentish Town Petition. Total of 148 signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twelve of these, *Netherclift* 1760.

KING'S CROSS AND ST. PANCRAS PETITION :

Inquiry made by witness, at the direction of Mr. Webster, as to the genuineness of this petition, which comprised thirty-one signatures; result of careful and personal investigation in the case of thirty signatures, that ten were not genuine, *Graden* 1072-1088—Belief that the petition was placed on a table in the Gray's Inn-road, with a man attending to it, who asked the passers-by to sign, *ib.* 1089-1096.

Witness (who is Member for East St. Pancras) explains the circumstances under which he presented a petition from King's Cross and St. Pancras, against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, though he had previously ascertained there were ten false signatures to it, *Webster* 1097-1099.

Explanations with special reference to a petition, the signatures to which were obtained in the Gray's Inn-road; exceptions taken to a statement that ten out of thirty signatures investigated were not genuine, *Wilson* 1103 *et seq.*—Discreditable appearance of the foregoing petition when it was returned to witness, so that he strongly objected to it at the time, though he dissents from the evidence of Mr. Webster's clerk as to ten out of thirty signatures having been not genuine, *ib.* 1104, 1105, 1122-1124, 1133-1145, 1154—Readiness of witness to make a careful personal examination of the petition from King's Cross and St. Pancras (taken in the Gray's Inn-road), and to submit the results to the Committee within a few days, *ib.* 1139, 1140, 1148, 1147, 1155.

Witness, who is a stationer and printer in the Gray's Inn-road, did not sign the petition from King's Cross presented to the House on 6th May against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; signatures thereto of his two sons, aged sixteen and eighteen, respectively, *Greiller* 1335-1346, 1359-1363, 1368, 1369—Explanation that this petition was placed on a table outside witness' shop, with a small handbill describing its object; it was in charge of a person named Middleton and an assistant, *ib.* 1347-1358, 1366, 1367.

Witness (who is order messenger to the House of Commons) submits particulars as to his having called at the addresses of nine persons purporting to have signed the King's Cross petition, and as to five of these persons not being known at the alleged addresses, *Coele* 1373-1408.

Information respecting the signatures obtained at a table in the Gray's Inn-road, which was placed near Messrs. Cubitt's in order that their workmen might sign; signatures procured in this case from tradesmen and passers-by generally, witness believing that all were genuine, whether taken by himself or, in his absence, by his assistant, *Middleton* 1500-1505, 1515-1524, 1538-1543, 1550 *et seq.*

Examination applied by witness to the sheets before handing them over to Mr. Wilson; conclusion as to the signatures generally having been genuine, and having been those of residents in the Holborn and King's Cross district, *Middleton* 1510-1515, 1547 *et seq.*—Explanation respecting particular signatures, with reference more especially to discrepancies as regards the addresses of the signatories, *ib.* 1558, 1564-1572, 1609-1613.

Employment of witness by Mr. Middleton to collect signatures in the Gray's Inn-road to a petition against the coal and wine dues; he saw all the signatures attached and believes the signatories resided in the locality, *Edmondson* 1630-1649—Neither women nor children were allowed to sign, *ib.* 1641.

Non-genuine character of from twenty to thirty signatures to the petition from King's Cross and East St. Pancras against the Bill, *Netherlyft* 1657, 1679-1681—Total of eighty-one signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twenty of these, *ib.* 1783.

Explanation as to witness having recently watched for a short time whilst signatures were being attached to a petition in charge of a man at the corner of the Gray's Inn-road, opposite the Holborn Town Hall; this petition was against the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *Isaacs* 1716-1718, 1731-1737—Comment upon the signing of the petition (without any apparent check by the man in charge) by a large number of boys and girls, some of them not more than thirteen or fourteen years old, who seemed to regard the matter as a good joke; conclusion as to the worthlessness of petitions generally when the signatures are thus obtained in the streets, *ib.* 1747-1749.

L.

Lambeth, Kennington, and Westminster Petition. Information respecting the petition from Lambeth, Kennington, and Westminster, the greater part of which seems to have been obtained by a man named James Sharland, of Kennington; great abuse in this case, numerous signatures having been obtained under false representations, *Dent* 1968-1972, 1978.

See,

Lee, Frederick William. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Entire inaccuracy of a statement by Bidmead as to his having given a petition to witness to sign; witness neither signed the petition in question nor was he asked by Bidmead to do so, 683-693.

Leeson, Thomas. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is a labourer, living in Arthur-street, Old Kent-road, denies that he attached his name and address to the petition from Peckham and Dulwich; nor did he authorise anyone to sign for him, 2195-2205.

Letter to the Speaker. Examination as to the circumstances under which witness wrote the letter to the Speaker; he suggested it himself, and denies that it was drawn up for him by Mr. Hallett or Mr. Wragg, *Bidmead* 223-225, 345-352.

Statement as regards the letter written by Bidmead to the Speaker, that the form and terms of it were supplied by Mr. Roberts; it was written by the former in the presence of witness, who approved of it, *Hallett* 482-488, 500, 501, 527-555, 545-552.

Reason assigned by witness for drafting the letter to the Speaker to be signed by Bidmead; denial that the letter was initiated or composed by the latter, *Roberts* 746-757.

Concurrence of witness in the proposal to send a letter to the Speaker confessing the forged signatures; at this time witness was not aware that Bidmead had forged other petitions besides that from Haggerston, *Wragg* 911-913, 918-935, 955-958.

Copy of Bidmead's letter to the Speaker, admitting "with great shame and sorrow that the Haggerston petition was entirely concocted by him," *App.* 137.

Lloyd, John. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is a justice of the peace for Breconshire, is honorary secretary of the London Municipal Reform League, and of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, 994.

Presentation, through the instrumentality of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, of some 250 petitions, with about 25,000 signatures, about half of which were obtained by voluntary and unpaid agency, 995-1019, 1032-1037—Belief that such petition can be traced to the canvasser by whom the signatures were collected, together with the number of signatures in each case, and the Member of Parliament by whom presented; a letter was sent with each petition to the Member who was asked to present it, 996-1028, 1049, 1050, 1059-1064.

Opinion that the signatures were honestly collected, and were *bona fide*; examination hereon as to the means and opportunities of witness for applying any efficient test to so many as 25,000 signatures, 995-1012, 1051-1058, 1065-1067—Circumstance of a detective officer having been employed, as a check upon the petitions got up in favour of the dues, 1013, 1014, 1053-1055.

List of seven canvassers employed by witness' committee; steps taken to ascertain their respectability, 1050-1054, 1058-1060—Total of only 123 l. 14 s. paid in connection with the petitions, including 20 l. for the detective officer, 1025-1027, 1043, 1049—Explanation as to the mode of distribution of the petition sheets, and the way in which they were, when signed and returned, placed together for presentation, 1058, 1063-1067.

Question raised by witness as to the genuineness of some of the signatures to the Camberwell petition; assurance given by the collector that they were all right, 1050, 1065-1067—Similarity between the handwriting of some of the signatures to the Bethnal Green petition; result of some investigation that they were accepted as genuine, 1065-1068.

[Second Examination.]—Explanation showing that witness can identify a considerable number of petitions as having passed through his hands; reference hereon to a list of the persons responsible for these petitions, though they did not actually collect the signatures, 1310-1314.

Lower Clapton Petition. See *Clapton Petition.*

M.

Martin, Charles. Summons served by witness upon Charles Martin, through his wife, who said Martin had signed a petition, *Coombs* 1376-1378.

This person called as a witness, but not in attendance, p. 79.

Marylebone. Total of 351 signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twenty-five of these, *Nethercliff* 1760—Further petition containing seventy-eight signatures, of which fifteen are doubtful, *ib.*

Massey,

Mossey, Edward Charles. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Statement to the effect that the alleged signature of witness to a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties is a forgery, 2105-2117.

Meetings (Adoption of Petitions). Inaccuracy as regards Petition No. 41 of the statement that a meeting in favour of the petition was held at Mile End Old Town, at which Mr. Francis Church was chairman, *Dent* 1954-1957.—Explanation also that no meeting was held, as alleged, at Page's Coffee Rooms, Islington, in connection with Petition No. 115, *ib.* 1957-1961.—Nor was any meeting of ratepayers and householders held on 15th December at Parkfield-street in the case of Petition No. 21, as has been alleged, *ib.* 1961, 1962.—Nor were certain alleged meetings held in connection with Petitions No. 43 and No. 4385, *ib.* 1962.

Middleton, Thomas John. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness by Mr. Wilson to collect signatures to petitions against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; he took charge of fourteen or fifteen petitions, which were chiefly left at large establishments in the Holborn and Gray's Inn-road and King's Cross district for the workpeople to sign, whilst five were signed in the street, 1499, 1500, 1517, 1546-1550, 1573-1587, 1590-1608.—Information respecting the signatures obtained at a table in the Gray's Inn-road, which was placed near Messrs. Cubitt's, in order that their workmen might sign; signatures procured in this case from tradesmen and passers-by generally, witness believing that all were genuine, whether taken by himself or, in his absence, by his assistant, 1500-1506, 1515-1524, 1538-1543, 1550, *et seq.*

Payment of 2 l. 15 s. received by witness from Mr. Wilson, there being 2 l. more to receive; he obtained from 500 to 600 signatures, 1507-1509, 1539-1537, 1557.—Examination applied by witness to the sheets before handing them over to Mr. Wilson; conclusion as to the signatures generally having been genuine, and having been those of residents in the Holborn and King's Cross district, 1510-1515, 1547 *et seq.*—Explanation respecting particular signatures, with reference more especially to discrepancies as regards the addresses of the signatories, 1558, 1564-1572, 1609-1613.—Large proportion of the signatures which represented the working classes, 1559-1563, 1590-1608, 1614-1629.—Readiness of the great mass of the working classes to sign petitions against the coal tax, 1614-1619.

Miles, Oliver. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness to investigate the signatures to a petition from East St. Pancras against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; total of seventy-three signatures, of which thirty-nine were inquired into by witness, 1442-1455.—Particulars respecting witness' investigation, and its result; very doubtful character of eighteen out of the thirty-nine signatures inquired into, 1454-1484.

Miners' Petition. Use of the same handwriting for the signatures of miners to the Durham petition, *Netherclift* 1656, 1693-1695, 1757-1760.

N.

Netherclift, Frederick George. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Long and extensive experience of witness as an expert in handwriting; examination (of a necessarily hurried and imperfect character) applied by him to all petitions against the Coal and Wine Duties Bill, and to six of those in favour of the Bill, 1650-1661, 1679-1686.

Statement to the effect that in twenty-six petitions against the Bill witness has detected only about 100 signatures not genuine, 1654-1659, 1667-1681, 1719-1725.—Use of the same handwriting for the signatures of miners to the Durham petition, 1656, 1693-1695.—Non-genuine character of from twenty to thirty signatures to the petition from King's Cross and East St. Pancras against the Bill, 1657, 1679-1681.

Gross fraud in the case of the six petitions (examined by witness) in favour of the continuance of the duties; particulars hereon as to the very extensive fabrication of signatures, 1659-1666, 1688-1692, 1696-1711, 1719-1725.—Several thousand forged signatures in the six petitions in question, 1664-1668.—Opinion, from a cursory examination of the Haggerston petition, that some of the signatures are not genuine, 1685-1687, 1692.—Three different hands used in forging signatures to petitions in favour of the duties, 1688-1692, 1710.—Four times as many forged signatures in the petitions in favour of the duties as in the petitions against them, 1720, 1721.

[Second Examination.]—Result of further and careful investigation, that witness has come to the conclusion that nearly all the signatures to the petitions in favour of the coal and wine duties are forgeries; details to this effect, 1743 *et seq.*—Belief that all or nearly all the signatures to the Ilford petition are false, 1746.—Total of 449 signatures

Netherclift, Frederick George. (Analysis of his Evidence)—continued.

tures to the Haggerston petition, nearly all of which are false, the same hand being largely employed in signing, 1748, 1747, 1769-1771, 1781, 1782.

Employment of three or four hands in nearly all the petitions in favour of the continuance of the dues, 1747, 1748, 1751-1755, 1764-1768, 1775-1782.—Summary of the petitions examined by witness, thirty-three in number, in favour of the dues, showing the number of signatures in each case, nearly all of which he believes to be false, 1748-1756, 1761.

List of the petitions, as examined by witness, against the continuance of the coal and wine dues, together with the number of signatures in each case; comparatively limited extent to which the signatures are not genuine, 1757-1764.—Further reference to the employment of the same hand in filling in the names of miners in the petition from Durham (Burnhope Colliery), there being no attempt to disguise, 1757-1760.

Total of 5,284 signatures to petitions adverse to the dues, out of which there are 426 doubtful, 1760, 1774.—Frequent instances of the same hand signing for several people in the petitions against the dues, but without any attempt at concealment; conclusion, generally, that there is no palpable fraud in the case of these petitions, 1761-1764, 1772, 1773.—Palpable fraud in connection with the petitions in favour of the dues, whole batches of signatures being made by the same hand, 1763-1768, 1775-1782.

[Third Examination.]—Very suspicious character of some of the signatures to the Peckham and Dulwich petition; investigation to be applied by witness to fifty or sixty names, 1949, 1950.

[Fourth Examination.]—With regard to the Peckham and Dulwich petition, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, witness submits certain figures to the effect that a very large proportion of the signatures are not genuine, 2047-2049.

North Hackney Petition. Impression that the petition from North Hackney presented by witness on the 16th March, was left for him in the cloak-room; he cannot recollect whether it was accompanied by a note, nor can he identify any of the signatures, *Sir L. Pelly* 25, 47.

This petition, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, contains 140 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

North London Petition. Total of 155 signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to sixteen of these, *Netherclift* 1760.

North St. Pancras Petition. Doubtful character of eight signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues), *Netherclift* 1760.

Number of Petitions. Large number of petitions which passed through witness' hands, *Roberts* 725, 729-731.—Considerable number of petitions from local boards and others in favour of the continuance of the dues, witness being responsible for all the other petitions with signatures of the public, *ib.* 854-858.

Presentation of some 250 petitions, comprising about 25,000 signatures, obtained through means of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, *Lloyd* 995, 1015-1019, 1033-1037.

Facility with which signatures were obtained in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *Correll* 1190-1192.—Doubt whether witness could identify any of the petitions or sheets which passed through his hands, the total signatures amounting to about 26,000, *Board* 1237-1239.

O.

Odell, Richard Davis. (Analysis of his Evidence).—Witness, who is a merchant in the City, residing at Denmark Hill, asserts that his alleged signature to a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties is a forgery, 2091-2104.

P.

Peckham and Dulwich Petition. Conclusion as to the forgery of signatures to the petition from Peckham and Dulwich; doubt if there be one genuine signature, *Netherclift* 1605, 1669 et seq.; 1701-1703.—This petition (in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues) contains 1,970 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *ib.* 1749.

Steps recently taken by witness to test the genuineness of the signatures to the petition from Peckham and Dulwich and to the Camberwell petition; trustworthy men employed

Special Report, 1887—continued.

Peckham and Dulwich Petition—continued.

to call at the addresses of about sixty of the signatories, one name being taken from each sheet for investigation, *Roberts* 1783-1787. 1791-1805.—Reports submitted from the men employed to verify the signatures, showing the names and addresses of each person called upon and their replies; general result that out of sixty-one calls made forty-eight of the signatures were found to be genuine, seven of the signatories were not at home, three were not known, one had removed, and two signatures were false, *ib.* 1788-1795.—Discredit thrown especially upon the two foregoing petitions by Mr. Nethercliff, he having stated that nearly all the signatures were forged or false; very different result proved by witness' inquiry, *ib.* 1795-1810.

Very suspicious character of some of the signatures to the Peckham and Dulwich petition; investigation to be applied by witness to fifty or sixty names, *Nethercliff* 1919, 1960.

Witness submits certain figures to the effect that a very large proportion of the signatures are not genuine, *Nethercliff* 2047-2049.

Witness signed a petition, whether for or against the continuance of the coal and wine duties he cannot say, but denies having written the signature "George Ford," attached to the Peckham and Dulwich petition in favour of such continuance, *Ford* 2059-2081.

Witness asserts that his alleged signature to a petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties is a forgery, *Odeff* 2091-2104.

Witness signed a petition for the continuance of the coal and wine duties, and explains the circumstances under which he did so; denial however that his name as attached to the Peckham and Dulwich petition is in his handwriting, *Russell* 2172-2194.

Witness denies that he attached his name and address to the petition from Peckham and Dulwich; nor did he authorise any one to sign for him, *Huxner* 2195-2205.

Witness, who lives in the Commercial-road, Peckham, was asked in a public-house to sign the Peckham and Dulwich petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, and now identifies his signature to the petition, *Huxner* 2205-2213.—This petition was also signed in witness' presence by a young man named Hallett, *ib.* 2214, 2215.

Pelly, Lieut. General Sir Lewis, K.C.B., K.C.S.I. (a Member of the House.) (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Presentation by witness of a considerable number of petitions for and against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, 21, 22.—Explanation as to petitions being either sent to his own residence or left for him in the cloak-room of the House of Commons; frequent omission of the addresses of the senders, though witness does not feel justified in not presenting petitions so long as they purport to come from his constituents, 23, 24, 29, 37-48.

Impression that the petition from North Hackney, presented by witness on the 16th March, was left for him in the cloak-room; he cannot recollect whether it was accompanied by a note nor can he identify any of the signatures, 25-27.

Presentation of Petitions. Witness produces nine petitions from different parts of the Metropolis in favour of the London Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill; date of presentation in each case and Member by whom presented, *Taylor* 1-9.—Pressure of business in the office in connection with the petitions, so that though some of them were presented in March they could not be brought under the notice of the Petitions Committee till after the Easter recess, *ib.* 11-13.

Presentation by witness of a considerable number of petitions for and against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, *Sir L. Pelly* 21, 22.—Explanation as to petitions being either sent to his own residence or left for him in the cloak-room of the House of Commons; frequent omission of the addresses of the senders, though witness does not feel justified in not presenting petitions so long as they purport to come from his constituents, *ib.* 23, 24, 29, 37-48.

Presentation by witness of some petitions for and against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, *Colomb* 48, 49.—Presentation by witness of about six petitions on the subject of the coal and wine duties, most of which were received in the cloak-room, *Howard* 76, 77.—Statement to the effect that his attention was not specially attracted nor his suspicion excited by the character of the signatures, though on closer inspection he sees considerable resemblance between the handwriting of different signatures, whilst some of them look as if intentionally assumed, *ib.* 78-81.

Presentation by witness of twenty additional petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; particulars as to the localities, dates of presentation, and names of Members by whom presented, *Taylor* 653-671.

Belief that each petition against the duties can be traced to the canvassers by whom the signatures were collected, together with the number of signatures in each case and the

Presentation of Petitions—continued.

the Member of Parliament by whom presented; a letter was sent with each petition to the member who was asked to present it, *Lloyd* 995, 1028, 1049, 1050, 1059-1064.

Special attention called by the Committee to the practice of presenting petitions without any kind of voucher for their genuineness, *Rep.* iv.

Public Houses. Statement to the effect that witness was asked, in a public-house, to sign a petition for the continuance of the coal and wine duties, and that he did so; he identifies his signature on a petition submitted to him by the Committee, *Bryant* 2118-2140.—Belief that no signatures were obtained by witness in public-houses, *Sharland* 2322-2327.

Public Opinion. Grounds upon which witness concluded that public opinion on the question of the duties might be properly expressed by means of petitions obtained by a house-to-house canvass; reference hereon to certain deputations previously to different Members of the Government, *Wragg* 872, 873, 914, 915.

R.

Ratepayers. Statement as to ratepayers' signatures not having been stipulated for by witness, *Board* 1263-1268.—Witness did not instruct his sub-employed to obtain ratepayers' signatures, *Sharland* 2370.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Payment by witness personally of those employed by him; sole responsibility assumed by him for the petitions in question, *Roberts* 706, 784.—Witness did not employ Bidmead, the latter having been engaged by Mr. Hallett, one of witness' sub-agents, *ib.* 712, 713-719.

Examination to the effect that witness holds himself primarily responsible, and that his sub-agents were responsible to him; he could exercise no check over those employed by the latter to collect signatures, *Roberts* 784-823.—Readiness evinced by witness, on hearing that the Haggerston petition was questioned, to investigate the matter, and to obtain the fullest information for the House of Commons, *ib.* 784-784, 859.—Instances of sheets having been withheld by witness as having been signed improperly or indecently, *ib.* 807-811, 921-923, 1307, 1308.

Regret experienced by witness that he has been the unfortunate means through which the Haggerston and other petitions with suspicious signatures have reached the House of Commons; he has since taken every possible step to elicit the fullest information for the House, *Roberts* 859.

Employment by witness of Mr. Carlton Roberts, and of him alone, in getting up the petitions, *Wragg* 880-882, 896.—Profound regret expressed by witness as regards the forged petitions, *ib.* 885, 886, 910, 950.

Entire disavowal of Bidmead, whom witness never saw till the 27th April; particulars as to Bidmead having made a statement on that day, which was taken down by witness, that there was not a single genuine signature to the Haggerston petition, *Wragg* 887-898.—Employment of Bidmead by Mr. Hallett; disavowal by witness of the latter as well as the former, *ib.* 890-892, 898.

Admission by witness of his primary responsibility in the matter, whilst Mr. Roberts was responsible to him, and Mr. Hallett and others to Mr. Roberts, *Wragg* 950, 954, 955, 968-976.

General responsibility imposed upon witness as to the work of looking over the loose sheets, and allocating them to the petition headings, *Roberts* 981.

Reiteration of witness' strong expression of regret as regards the extensive forgeries of signatures proved before the Committee; repudiation of any fraud on his part, *Roberts* 2216-2218.

Issuance of the petitions for the Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill by the City Solicitor, who instructed Mr. R. T. Wragg, who in turn engaged the services of Mr. Carlton Roberts, *Rep.* iii.—Comment upon the great negligence shown by those who were in different degrees responsible for the petitions, *ib.*

See also Agents. Convancers. Forged Signatures. Hallett, J. W. Roberts, C.

Right of Petition. Opinion as to the worthless character of the petitions generally presented to Parliament, *Hallett* 616, 617.—Belief that not more than 25 per cent. of the signatures are genuine, *ib.* 617.

Right of Petition—continued.

Reference to certain forms and rules of the House on the subject of public petitions and the extent to which adopted by witness, *Wragg* 978-980.

Entire dissent from Mr. Hallett's statement that not 25 per cent. of the signatures to petitions generally are genuine, *Roberts* 1816, 1817.

Opinion of the Committee that the right of petitioning the House of Commons has of late years been subjected to serious abuse, and merits the attention of the House, *Rep.* iv.

See also Forged Signatures.

Roberts, Carlton. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Business of witness as a printer, at Hackney; he acts as a political agent, and was employed by Mr. Robert Wragg to procure signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties, 700-708.—Payment by witness, personally, of those employed by him; sole responsibility assumed by him for the petitions in question, 706, 784.—List of political agents employed by witness to obtain signatures through others; belief that he has never paid any one who actually collected a signature, 709-713.—Belief that three small petitions, got up by sub-agents, named Bull, Remington, and Vidler, were not questioned, 710, 764, 765.—He did not employ Bidmead, the latter having been engaged by Mr. Hallett, one of witness' sub-agents, 712, 713, 719.—Explanation that he has not yet been repaid a single penny of his outlay, having deferred sending in his account to Mr. Wragg, 713-718.

Inquiry made by witness, through Mr. Hallett, on hearing that the signatures to the Haggerston petition (presented by Lord Claud Hamilton) had been questioned in the House of Commons; assurance subsequently given to Mr. Hallett by Bidmead that the signatures were genuine, 716.—Test applied to some of the signatures, which were discovered to be fictitious; admission thereupon by Bidmead that he had forged them, 719, 720.—Arrangement made by witness as to Mr. Hallett and Bidmead attending at Mr. Wragg's office, when their depositions in the matter were taken down; that is, with reference only to the Haggerston petitions, 721-723, 727, 728, 824-824.

Careful and explicit instructions given by witness to Mr. Hallett and other sub-agents to the effect that the signatures must be *bona fide*, 724, 768, 815, 836, 843-846.—Large number of petitions which passed through witness' hands, 725, 729-731.—Extent of witness' inspection of the Haggerston petition; conclusion on his part that it was all right as he identified the first name on one of the sheets as that of a person favourable to the continuance of the dues, 726, 758, 825, 826.—Explanation that the separate sheets were found together in Mr. Wragg's office, the petitions having been made up for different districts, 732, 733.

Employment by witness, exclusively, of all the sub-agents engaged upon the petitions, the total sum paid by him amounting to about 376*l.*, 735-737.—Statement to the effect that Bidmead had admitted only 200 forged signatures to the Haggerston petition up to the time of witness having prepared the letter from him to the Speaker; nor had witness any idea, when he suggested this letter, that any other petitions were questioned, 738-757-784, 787, 816, 824, 827-833.—Reason assigned by witness for drafting the letter to the Speaker, to be signed by Bidmead; denial that the letter was initiated or composed by the latter, 746-757.

Large number of sheets, with a printed heading, given to each of witness' sub-agents, to be returned with signatures; arrangement that about 200 names would make up a petition, 759-763.—Great variation in the amounts paid to different sub-agents, some having been much more active than others; stipulation in all cases that the signatures must be *bona fide*, 766-776, 835-846, 859.—Further statement as to witness not having been repaid his disbursements, whilst he has received no remuneration for his own services; difficulty on his part in stating the probable amount of his own remuneration, 777-783, 853.

Examination to the effect that though witness holds himself primarily responsible, and though his sub-agents were responsible to him, he could exercise no check over those employed by the latter to collect signatures, 784-823.—Readiness evinced by witness, on hearing that the Haggerston petition was questioned, to investigate the matter and to obtain the fullest information for the House of Commons, 784-794, 865.—Great difficulty through the separate sheets not admitting of the identification of the persons by whom the signatures were collected, witness not being responsible for the latter; check to these in future if the collector were required to endorse his sheet, 795-810, 817-823.

Explanation as to the names of race-horses having appeared as signatures; probability that the sheet had been left at a public-house, 807.—Elimination of many sheets with objectionable matter and with false names; physical impossibility of witness checking all the signatures, 807-811.

Examination

Special Report, 1887—continued.

Roberts, Carlton. (Analysis of his Evidence)—continued.

Examination of the sheets in Mr. Wragg's office before they were included in the petitions presented to Parliament; responsibility of Mr. Wragg's staff in the matter, 818. 823. 847-852.—Large number of petitions from local boards and others in favour of the continuance of the dues, witness being responsible for all the other petitions with the signatures of the public, 854-858.

Regret expressed by witness that he has been the unfortunate means through which the Haggerston and other petitions with suspicious signatures have reached the House of Commons; he has since taken every possible step to elicit the fullest information for the House, 859.

Advantages of the system of paying canvassers a certain sum for 100 signatures instead of by the day, 859.—Very large number of signatures obtainable in one day by taking the petition sheets through large drapery establishments, *ib.*—Belief that many of the sheets picked out by Bidmead as having been forged by him were not forged at all, and that his forgeries were distributed over a much larger number of petitions than was stated by him, *ib.*

[Second Examination.]—General responsibility imposed upon witness as to the work of looking over the loose sheets, and allocating them to the petition headings, 981.—Instances of sheets having been withheld by witness as having been signed improperly or indecently, 981-989. 991-993.—Pressure put by witness upon his agents as to getting in all the later petitions by a certain day, the irregularities which occurred applying chiefly to these petitions, 990.

Satisfactory course pursued by the canvassers, in so far as witness himself was asked by one of them for his signature, 993.—Irregularity in the case of factory hands, when one man is asked by several others to sign for them, *ib.*

[Third Examination.]—Production by witness of certain sheets of signatures which looked suspicious, so that he withheld them from the petitions presented, 1307, 1308.—Effectual check upon the loose sheets of signatures being attached to any other form of petition than that for the continuance of the coal and wine dues, 1308, 1309.

[Fourth Examination.]—Steps recently taken by witness to test the genuineness of the signatures to the petition from Peckham and Dulwich, and to the Camberwell petition; trustworthy men employed to call at the addresses of about sixty of the signatures, one name being taken from each sheet for investigation, 1783. 1787. 1791-1805.—Reports submitted from the men employed to verify the signatures, showing the name and address of each person called upon and their replies; general result that out of sixty-one calls made forty-eight of the signatures were found to be genuine, seven of the signatures were not at home, three were not known, one had removed, and two signatures were false, 1788-1793.

Discredit thrown especially upon the two foregoing petitions by Mr. Netherclift, he having stated that nearly all the signatures were forged or false; very different result proved by witness' inquiry, 1795-1810.—Comment upon Mr. Netherclift's assumption that the petitions have been concocted by about three persons, and the signatures filled in by them; statement purporting to show that this was utterly impracticable, 1810-1815.—Employment of from 115 to 120 canvassers; great improbability of collusion between all these, 1810-1816.—Evidence proposed to be adduced as to the genuine character of the St. Pancras petition, 1814-1826.

Belief that excepting the signatures forged by Bidmead the first signatures to all the petitions can be verified, 1814.—Entire dissent from Mr. Hallett's statement, that not 25 per cent. of the signatures to petitions generally are genuine, 1815. 1817.—Much greater value attached to signatures obtained by a house-to-house canvass than to those procured in the street from passers-by; much greater liability to abuse in the latter case, 1819-1825.

[Fifth Examination.]—Reiteration of witness' strong expression of regret as regards the extensive forgeries of signatures proved before the Committee; repudiation of any fraud on his part, 2216-2218.—Suggestions upon the question of securing the attendance of Sharland, one of the canvassers employed by Mr. Hallett, 2218-2221.

Roberts, Carlton. Result of witness's previous experience of Mr. Roberts in political matters that he found him able, careful, and reliable, so that he entrusted the matter of the petitions entirely to him on the understanding that everything was to be done right, Wragg 895. 905-910. 917. 925. 974-980.

Conclusion of the Committee that, although no charge of participation in fraud has been brought home to Mr. Carlton Roberts, still his neglect to exercise proper supervision over the work of his sub-agents led directly to the irregularities that followed, *Rep. B.*

See also *Agents and Sub-Agents.*

Haggerston Petition.

Forged Signatures.

Burrell, Abraham. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness signed a petition for the continuance of the coal and wine dues, and explains the circumstances under which he did so; denial, however, that his name as attached to the Peckham and Dulwich petition is in his handwriting, 2172-2194.

S.

Sadler, William. Service of a summons on William Sadler, who promised to attend the Committee, and who said he had signed the petition from King's Cross, Counts 1372-1375.

This person called as a witness, but not in attendance, p. 79.

St. Pancras. Total of 1,464 signatures contained in the St. Pancras petition, nearly all of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1748—Total of seventy-seven signatures to a further petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twelve of these, *ib.* 1760.

Evidence proposed to be adduced as to the genuine character of the St. Pancras petition, *Roberts* 1814, 1826.

Employment of witness as a canvasser for signatures to the petition from St. Pancras in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; he was engaged by Mr. Ball, and was at work for about five weeks, *Usher* 1827-1829, 1833, 1838-1911, 1932-1933—Difficulty on witness' part in positively identifying any of the sheets of the St. Pancras petition as having passed through his hands, or any one signature thereupon, though he obtained 3,000 signatures in the district; he canvassed Camden Town but not St. John's Wood, *ib.* 1829, *et seq.*—House-to-house canvass by witness; care taken by him to explain the object of the petition, and to take only the signatures of grown-up people, whilst he never signed for others, *ib.* 1845, 1852-1856, 1868-1870, 1928-1939.

See also *East St. Pancras.* *North St. Pancras.* *West St. Pancras.*

St. Pancras and King's Cross Petition. See *King's Cross*, &c.

Sharland, A. George. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness, who is a commercial traveller residing in Waltham, by Mr. Hallett, to collect signatures to petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; injunction by Mr. Hallett that all the signatures must be genuine, 2223-2233, 2252, 2253, 2262—Payment of witness at the rate of 4 s. 6 d. per 100 signatures, with a small allowance for expenses, 2234, 2235—Collection of signatures chiefly at the Peabody-buildings, witness having attested with his own signature where parties were unable to write their own names, 2239-2242, 2243—Information as to the address of a brother of witness who got 100 or 200 signatures, 2244-2249, 2263-2265—House-to-house canvass carried out by witness; he did not ask any one to sign in the street, and did not represent that the petition related to the closing of public-houses, 2250, 2251, 2254-2258.

[Second Examination.]—Further information respecting the remuneration received by witness from Mr. Hallett, the probable number of signatures collected, and the way in which his canvass was conducted, 2293 *et seq.*—Circumstance of witness having had two other petitions in charge at the time he was collecting signatures in favour of the coal and wine dues; particular hereon, 2295-2297, 2374-2376, 2386-2396.

Belief that no signatures were obtained by witness in public-houses, 2322-2327—Statement as to witness having employed his brother and five or six other men to procure signatures, and to bring only genuine ones; he paid them at the rate of 3 s. per 100; 2335-2373, 2378-2385—Total of from 12 l. to 15 l. received by witness from Mr. Hallett, 2377.

Sharland, John. Information as to the address of a brother of witness, who got 100 or 200 signatures, *Sharland* 2244-2249, 2263-2265.

Explanation that John Sharland was not employed nor paid by witness, but only his brother, A. G. Sharland, *Hallett* 2267-2269, 2276-2282, 2288, 2289.

SHEETS AND HEADINGS :

Supply of the petition sheets to witness by Mr. Hallett, *Bidwood* 260-263—Examination of the petition-sheets by Mr. Hallett on receiving them from witness, who assured him they were all *bonâ fide*, *ib.* 442, 443.

Doubt as to the number of petition sheets or of printed headings given by witness to Bidwood and other canvassers; printed and written headings were given to all the men employed, *Hallett* 505-507, 559-605—Explanation as to witness' mode of distributing the separate sheets among the canvassers, and as to the sheets, when signed, having been

SHEETS AND HEADINGS—continued.

been returned loose to Mr. Roberts; witness had nothing to do with putting them together under the printed heads, *Hallett* 590-596. 604, 605. 618-626. 636-644.

Explanation that the separate sheets were joined together in Mr. Wragg's office, the petitions having been made up for different districts, *Roberts* 732, 733.—Large number of sheets with a printed heading, given to each of witness' sub-agents, to be returned with signatures; arrangement that about 200 names would make up a petition, *ib.* 759-763.

Great difficulty through the separate sheets not admitting of the identification of the persons by whom the signatures were collected, witness not being responsible for the latter; check to abuse in future if the collector were required to endorse his sheet, *Roberts* 795-810. 817-823.—Examination of many sheets with objectionable matter, and with false names; physical impossibility of witness checking all the signatures, *ib.* 807-811. 991-993.—Examination of the sheets in Mr. Wragg's office before they were included in the petitions presented to Parliament; responsibility of Mr. Wragg's staff in the matter, *ib.* 818. 823. 847-852.

Employment of witness' clerks in putting together the petition sheets, but not in checking the signatures; belief that there was no abuse on their part in not placing the loose sheets under the proper petition heading, though this irregularity was feasible, *Wragg* 907-910. 916, 917. 934-935. 950-953. 959-966.

Return of the petition sheets to Mr. Roberts after witness had examined the signatures; difficulty on his part as to his now identifying any of the petitions or sheets which passed through his hands, *Correll* 1164. 1167-1170. 1182-1188. 1195-1203.

Collection of signatures by witness' agents chiefly in central Finsbury; examination applied to the sheets by witness before handing them over to Mr. Roberts, *DeHorne* 1294-1297. 1300, 1301.

Production by witness of certain sheets of signatures which looked suspicious, so that he withheld them from the petitions presented, *Roberts* 1307. 1308.—Effectual check upon the loose sheets of signatures being attached to any other form of petition than that for the continuance of the coal and wine dues, *ib.* 1308, 1309.

Explanation as to the mode of distribution of the petition sheets against the continuance of the coal and wine dues, and the way in which they were, when signed and returned, placed together for presentation, *Lloyd* 1028. 1043. 1047.

Special attention called by the Committee to the practice of piecing together sheets of signatures without reference to the quarter from which they are obtained, and the headings ultimately affixed to them, *Rep. iv.*

Skarredike Petition. This petition contains 137 signatures, nearly all of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Simson, Stephen L. (Clerk to the Committee). (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Inquiry made by witness (as directed by the Committee), as to the case of twenty-nine petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, whether each individual whose name was appended to the prayer sheet of each petition had really signed, 2050-2054.—Receipt of fourteen answers to this inquiry, eleven of which are in the affirmative, whilst three persons deny having signed; particulars to this effect, 2051, 2052, 2057, 2058.—Obstacles to the ascertainment by witness whether any one person had signed more than one petition; insufficient time, moreover, for any more exhaustive inquiry, 2054-2056.

[Second Examination.] Return of four of witness' letters of inquiry through the Dead Letter Office, whilst six more persons admit having signed, and four deny having done so, 2092.

Somers Town Petition. Total of 107 signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twelve of these, *Netherclift* 1760.

South-East London Petition. This petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, contains 1,796 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Netherclift* 1749.

Southwark Petition. The Southwark petition contains 664 signatures, nearly all of which are false, *Netherclift* 1748, 1749.

Stewart, William. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness (who is a photographer at Manor Park, Essex) by Mr. Carlton Roberts to obtain signatures to petitions; he was to receive 5d. for his services, and he paid canvassers at the rate 5s. for every 100 signatures, 1315-1325.—Supply of about 5,000 signatures by witness, some of which he obtained by canvassing in person; genuine character of all the latter signatures 175.

Stewart, William. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—continued.

tures, 1319-1321. 1326-1329.—Instances of forged signatures, notably those of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. A. J. Balfour, as well as of filthy matter on some of the sheets supplied to witness by his sub-agents, 1330-1334.

Stratford and West Ham Petition. This petition contains seventy-four signatures, nearly all of which witness believes to be false, *Notherclift* 1748.

Street Canvassing. Instruction given by witness that the men in charge of the petition^a against the continuance of the coal and wine duties were not to take the signatures of boys under eighteen years of age; difficulty on this score when signatures are taken in the street, *Wilson* 1117-1119.—Considerable value attached to the practice of taking the signatures of working men and other passers-by in the streets, though it is probable that some signatures not genuine would be attached, *ib.* 1119. 1125-1132. 1154.—Large proportion (fully one-half) of signatures obtained in the streets, out of the 11,505 signatures to the petitions which passed through witness' hands, *ib.* 1131. 1148-1150.

Employment of witness by Mr. Wilson to collect signatures to petitions against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; he took charge of fourteen or fifteen petitions which were chiefly left at large establishments in the Holborn and Gray's Inn-road, and King's Cross district, for the workpeople to sign, whilst five were signed in the street, *Middleton* 1499, 1500. 1517. 1526-1530. 1573-1587. 1590-1608.—Payment of 2*l.* 15*s.* received by witness from Mr. Wilson, there being 2*l.* more to receive; he obtained from 500 to 800 signatures, *ib.* 1507-1509. 1532-1537. 1557.

Much greater value attached to signatures obtained by a house-to-house canvass than to those procured in the street from passers-by; much greater liability to abuse in the latter case, *Roberts*, 1819-1825.

Witness was employed to obtain signatures in the street from passers-by to a petition against the continuance of the coal and wine duties; he denies that he allowed young boys and girls to sign, though women were allowed to do so, *Bartlett*, 1995-2010.—He was in charge of the petition throughout the day, and was stationed for two-and-a-half days opposite the Holborn Town Hall, *ib.* 2004-2007. 2019-2035.—Another man was employed outside the Royal Free Hospital in the Gray's Inn-road upon another petition, *ib.* 2043-2046.

Special attention called by the Committee to the placing of petitions on tables in the open air, at which the signatures of passers-by are obtained, which are not capable of identification, *Rep. iv.*—See also *Canvassers, King's Cross and St. Pancras Petition.*

T.

Taylor, Alfred. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is a Civil Service writer in the Journal Office, produces nine petitions from different parts of the metropolis in favour of the London Coal and Wine Duties Continuance Bill; date of presentation in each case, and Member by whom presented, 1-9.—Pressure of business in the office in connection with the petitions, so that though some of them were presented in March they could not be brought under the notice of the Petitions Committee till after the Easter recess, 11-13.

Result of witness' examination of the petition from Haggerston that he concluded the signatures were forgeries, whereupon he reported the same, 13.—Explanation respecting the intentional smearing of the signatures to some of the petitions; similar hand-writing traceable through the nine petitions now produced, 15-20.

[Second Examination.]—Production by witness of twenty additional petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; particulars as to the localities, dates of presentation, and names of Members by whom presented, 653-671.—Reference to the petition from Greenwich and Canaburwell as containing, in witness' opinion, a very large number of forged signatures; there are the names of some thirteen race-horses upon the last sheet of this petition, 656-664.—Several instances of forged signatures to the North-west Ham petition, 665-668.

Examination by an expert of some of the petitions adverse to the continuance of the duties; opinion that these generally are of a very fair character, though some irregularities may exist in them, 672-674. 677-680.—Suspicious character on the other hand of the twenty petitions now produced, in favour of the duties; belief that a very large number of signatures to each petition are not genuine, or are questionable, 675. 676. 681. 682.

Taylor, Samuel Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness, who is a clerk and traveller at Brockley, by Mr. Board, of Brockley, to collect signatures for a petition

Taylor, Samuel Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—continued.

petition in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; he was instructed that the signatures must be those of adults, and must be *done* *de*, 1409-1417—House-to-house canvass by witness for signatures, which were collected on separate sheets; he was paid at the rate of 5s. per 100 signatures, but collected less than 200; 1414, 1415, 1418-1420, 1430-1441—Readiness of the great majority of those called upon by witness to sign the petition; to the best of his knowledge and belief all the signatures were genuine, 1421-1437.

U.

Usher, Henry. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Employment of witness as a canvasser for signatures to the petition from St. Pancras in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues; he was engaged by Mr. Ball, and was at work for about five weeks, 1827-1829, 1893, 1898-1911, 1932-1939.

Difficulty on witness' part in positively identifying any of the sheets of the St. Pancras petition as having passed through his hands, or any one signature thereupon, though he obtained 3,000 signatures in the district; he canvassed Camden Town but not St. John's Wood, 1829 *et seq.*—House-to-house canvass by witness; care taken by him to explain the object of the petition, and to take only the signatures of grown-up people, whilst he never signed for others, 1845, 1852-1856, 1868-1870, 1928-1939—Payment of witness at the rate of 6s. per 100 signatures, 1898-1900.

W.

Webster, Grant Roberts (Member of the House). (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is Member for East St. Pancras, explains the circumstances under which he presented a petition from King's Cross and St. Pancras against the continuance of the coal and wine duties, though he had previously ascertained there were ten false signatures to it, 1097-1099.

West Ham and Leytonstone Petition. This petition, in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine dues, contains 393 signatures, nearly the whole of which witness believes to be false, *Nethersift* 1749.

West Islington Petition. Total of thirty-eight signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); belief that all are genuine, *Nethersift* 1760—Further petition with seventy-one signatures, of which twelve are doubtful, *ib.*

West St. Pancras Petition. Total of 101 signatures to this petition (against the continuance of the coal and wine dues); doubt as to twelve of these, *Nethersift* 1760.

Wilson, Newton. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is a mechanical engineer, of the firm of Newton Wilson & Co., is a member of the Anti-Coal Tax Committee and of the Executive Committee of the Municipal Reform League, 1100-1102.

Steps proposed by witness to the Anti-Coal Tax Committee, and subsequently carried out, for obtaining signatures to petitions against the coal and wine duties; sum of 30 *l.* placed at his disposal for this purpose, followed by a further sum of 10 *l.*; 1103-1107, 1151-1153—Responsible men employed by witness for leaving the petition forms at various factories and workshops all over London, and for obtaining signatures in the streets, more than 200 petitions having been issued, of which ninety-two, containing 11,505 signatures, were eventually presented to the House, 1103, 1120, 1121, 1131—Practice as to the payment of the men employed to obtain signatures, and as to the checks upon abuse, 1103, 1107, 1111-1113.

Explanations with special reference to a petition the signatures to which were obtained in the Gray's Inn-road; exceptions taken to a statement that ten out of thirty signatures investigated were not genuine, 1103 *et seq.*—Discreditable appearance of the foregoing petition when it was returned to witness, so that he strongly objected to it at the time, though he dissents from the evidence of Mr. Webster's clerk as to ten out of thirty signatures not having been genuine, 1104, 1105, 1122-1124, 1133-1145, 1154—Scrutiny applied by witness to every sheet before passing it for presentation to the House; belief that he can produce every one of the men in whose presence all the signatures were attached, 1107, 1111-1115, 1139, 1140.

Instruction given by witness that the men in charge of the petitions were not to take the signatures of boys under eighteen years of age; difficulty on this score when signatures

Special Report, 1887.

Witness, Newton. (Analysis of his Evidence)—*continued.*

tures are taken in the street, 1117-1119 — Considerable value attached to the practice of taking the signatures of working-men and other passers-by in the streets, though it is probable that some signatures not genuine would be attached, 1119, 1125-1132, 1154 — Large proportion (fully one-half) of signatures obtained in the streets, out of the 11,505 signatures to the petitions which passed through witness' hands, 1131, 1142-1150.

Readiness of witness to make a careful personal examination of the petition from King's Cross and St. Pancras (taken in the Gray's Inn-road), and to submit the results to the Committee within a few days, 1139, 1140, 1146, 1147, 1155 — Explanation that witness' services in the matter of petitions have been entirely gratuitous; he has expended about 58 l. or 53 l. towards which he has received 40 l., 1141, 1151-1153.

Working Classes. Large proportion of the signatures obtained by witness in the streets, which represented the working classes, *Middleton* 1559-1563, 1590-1608, 1614-1629 — Readiness of the great mass of the working classes to sign petitions against the coal tax, &c. 1614-1619 — See also *Street Canvassing*.

Wragg, Robert Thomas. (Analysis of his Evidence.)—Witness, who is a solicitor and political agent, was employed by the City authorities in connection with the petitions in favour of the continuance of the coal and wine duties; instructions received by him from the City Solicitor in the matter, 860-872.

Grounds upon which witness concluded that public opinion on the question of the duties might be properly expressed by means of petitions obtained by a house-to-house canvass; reference hence to certain deputations previously to different Members of the Government, 872, 873, 914, 915 — Explanation that there was no arrangement with the City authorities as to witness' scale of remuneration; he had acted, professionally, for the Corporation, on several previous occasions, 874-879, 899-902, 936-942, 988, 976 — Employment by witness of Mr. Carlton Roberts, and of him alone, in getting up the petitions, 880-882, 898.

Strong repudiation of the petition from Greenwich, comprising the names of race-horses; witness knows nothing of Mr. Ball, who put up this petition, 883-886, 916 — Profound regret expressed by witness as regards the forged petition, 886, 886, 910, 950 — Entire disavowal of Bidmead, whom witness never saw till the 17th April; particulars as to Bidmead having made a statement on that day, which was taken down by witness, that there was not a single genuine signature to the Haggerston petition, 887-898 — Employment of Bidmead by Mr. Hallett; disavowal by witness of the latter, as well as the former, 890-892, 898.

Result of witness' previous experience of Mr. Roberts in political matters that he found him able, careful, and reliable, so that he entrusted the matter of the petitions entirely to him, on the understanding that everything was to be done right, 898, 905-910, 917, 925, 974-980 — There was no agreement with Mr. Roberts as to his remuneration; inability of witness to state how much Mr. Roberts expects, or should be paid, especially as so many signatures have been forged, 897, 903, 904, 943-949.

Employment of witness' clerk in putting together the petition sheets, but not in checking the signatures; belief that there was no abuse on their part in not placing the loose sheets under the proper petition heading, though this irregularity was feasible, 907-910, 916, 917, 946-955, 950-953, 959-966 — Concurrence of witness in the proposal to send a letter to the Speaker, confessing the forged signatures; at this time witness was not aware that Bidmead had forged other petitions besides that from Haggerston, 911-913, 918-935, 956-958 — Admission by witness of his primary responsibility in the matter, whilst Mr. Roberts was responsible to him, and Mr. Hallett and others to Mr. Roberts, 930, 964, 955, 968-976.

Great pressure under which the work of canvassing for signatures was undertaken; that is, in view of the action already taken by the opponents of the coal and wine duties, 966, 967, 976 — Expediency in future of the employment of a larger staff in canvassing for petitions and of greater vigilance generally, 987 — Reference to certain forms and rules of the House on the subject of public petitions, and the extent to which adopted by witness, 978-980.